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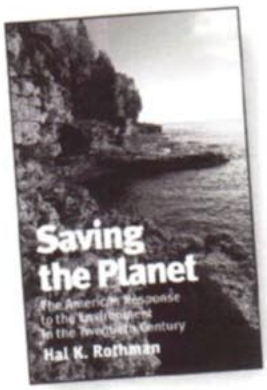

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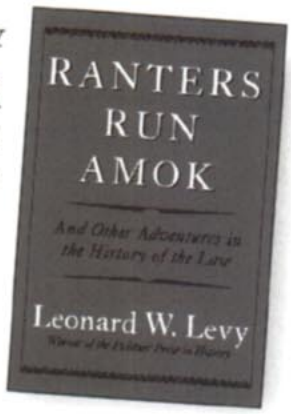

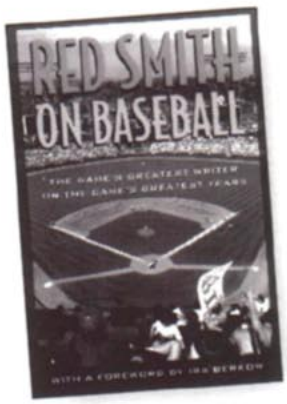

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Editor's Page

IT IS POSSIBLE (just possible; I don't mean to slip into the prophetic mode) that we are at the beginning of a new period of political activism. Globalization seems to be producing not only rapid-fire growth, erratic movements of capital, booms and busts, wealth and destitution, but also a politics of resistance and reform. Seattle '99 was a first sign—modest indeed relative to the mass demonstrations of the sixties, but impressive thirty years later. We devote a significant part of this issue to what happened there and what it might mean. ■ At this point, the meaning isn't clear. Capitalism today has effects similar to those that Marx described 150 years ago: "All that is solid melts into air." And so there isn't, and shouldn't be, a "correct" left line on globalization, but rather a wide range of views on the three critical issues: the politics of global governance, the economics of free trade, and the strategy and tactics of opposition to the current economic regime (or non-regime). The first of these we haven't yet addressed; we hope to begin a discussion in the near future. It is an old left question, never well answered: what does internationalism mean *politically*? There isn't a lot of agreement on what it means economically either, but on that question the lines are pretty well drawn. We will continue to print opinions from the different sides. ■ In any political movement, even in emerging movements that may never actually emerge, a lot of energy is devoted to the classic question: What ought to be done?—which has a corollary less often mentioned: What ought not to be done? The Arguments section in this issue is devoted to what diplomats call a "frank" discussion of these questions—specifically of the relation of "tactics and ethics." The phrase is from Lukács, writing in 1919 and expressing a set of theoretical certainties that seem wholly implausible today. If resistance to capitalist globalization grows, we will return to these questions, always questioningly; they are best answered (as the arguments here begin to answer them) in a practical way, with real illustrations and circumstantial detail. ■ However the discussion turns over the next years, we must end up with a politics very different from that of today's third way. The third wayers have surrendered without a fight to the earliest conventional understanding of global economics, which rejects the very possibility of a political response–or, more accurately, which requires a sharp curtailment of social democratic politics for the sake of "competitive standing" in the global economy. We reprint here the Blair-Schroeder third way manifesto, which doesn't quite admit the extent of the curtailment—with critical annotations by Joanne Barkan, who points to all the evasions, the vague references to leftist values, the efforts to back away from concrete commitments. We already need, and will need, politicians ready to defend a harder line than this one.

M.W.

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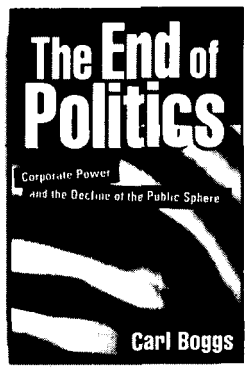

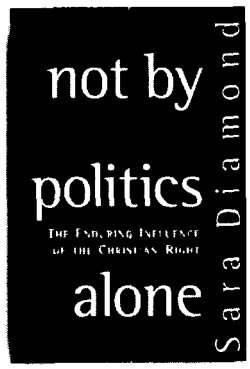

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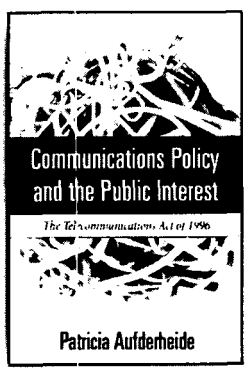

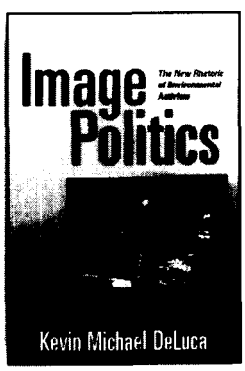

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The Longest Revolution

Ruth Rosen

AMERICAN WOMEN entered the twentieth century without the right to vote and ended it with the right "to have it all" as long as they "do it all." Progress? It depends on whom you ask. The nation's citizens are deeply divided about the changes that have transformed the lives of women. At the center of the "culture wars" remains the debate over the proper role for modern women in American society.

This has been the longest revolution of the century. Bursts of artillery fire, mass strikes, massacred protesters, bomb explosions—these are our images of revolution. But some revolutions are harder to recognize: no cataclysms mark their beginnings or ends, no casualties are left lying in pools of blood. Though people may suffer greatly, their pain is hidden from public view. Such was the case with the modern women's movement. Activists didn't hurl tear gas canisters at the police, burn down buildings or fight in the streets. Nor did they overthrow the government, achieve economic dominance or political hegemony. But they did subvert authority and transform society in irrevocable ways; so much so that young women who come of age in the twentieth-first century may not even recognize the America that existed before the feminist revolution came about.

Consider the last half of the twentieth century. During the 1950s, before the revolution began, the president of Harvard University saw no reason to increase the number of female undergraduates because the university's mission was to "train leaders," and Harvard's Lamont Library was off limits to women for fear they would distract male students. Newspaper ads separated jobs by sex; employers paid women less than men for the same work. Bars often refused to serve women; banks routinely denied women credit or loans. Some states even excluded women from jury duty. Radio producers considered women's voices too abrasive to be on air; television executives believed women didn't have enough credibility to anchor the news; women didn't run big corporations or universities, work as firefighters or police officers, sit on the Supreme Court, install electrical equipment, climb telephone poles, or own construction companies. All hurricanes bore female names, thanks to the widely held view that women brought chaos and destruction to society. As late as 1970, Edgar Berman, a well-known physician, proclaimed on television that women were too tortured by hormonal disturbances to assume the presidency of the nation. Few people knew more than a few women professors, doctors, or lawyers. Everyone addressed a woman as either Miss or Mrs., depending on her marital status, and if a woman wanted an abortion, legal nowhere in America, she risked her life, searching in back alleys for a competent and compassionate doctor. The public believed that any rape victims had probably "asked for it"; most women felt too ashamed to report it; and no language existed to make sense of marital rape, date rape, domestic violence, or sexual harassment. Just two words summed up the injuries women suffered in silence: "That's life."

LONG BEFORE the modern women's movement began, American women's participation in both the labor force and the sexual revolution had dramatically altered their lives. But it took the modern women's movement to address the many ways women felt exploited, to lend legitimacy to their sense of injustice, and to name and re-interpret customs and practices that had long been accepted, but for which there was no language.

Many men and women did not see it com-

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ing. In 1967, the well-respected and internationally renowned sociologist David Riesman, then a professor at Harvard University, uttered one of the most hilarious predictions in recent history. Writing in *Time* magazine in 1967, he declared, "If anything remains more or less unchanged, it will be the role of women." Poor timing. This was the year that the modern women's movement began spreading across the country and entering ordinary parlance.

As women activists learned to see the world through their own eyes, the feminist movement fragmented, and new populations of women—trade unionists, the old, the young, racial and ethnic minorities, some of whom had initially spurned feminism—began to assert different priorities. With that broadening constituency, many different feminisms began permeating American society.

A BACKLASH WAS inevitable, though few anticipated its ferocity. "If you're on the right track, you can expect some pretty savage criticism," veteran feminist Phyllis Chesler warned young women at the close of the twentieth century. "Trust it. Revel in it. It is the truest measure of your success." Words of wisdom from one of the pioneer activists who understood the meaning of a fierce backlash. She was right: no movement could have challenged so many ideas and customs without threatening vast numbers of women and men.

With its rallying cry of "family values" in the 1980s, the Republican right successfully tied up the Equal Rights Amendment in state legislatures and took the first steps to curtail the right to an abortion. But the backlash masked another reality. By the end of the twentieth century, feminist ideas had burrowed too deeply into our culture for any resistance or politics to root them out. The backlash, in short, reflected a society deeply divided and disturbed by rapid changes in men's and women's lives, at home and at work.

But at the height of the backlash, ironically, more American women, not fewer, grasped the importance of the goals of the women's movement. In 1986, a Gallup poll asked women, "Do you consider yourself a feminist?" At a time when identifying yourself as a feminist felt like a risky admission, 56 percent of American women were willing to do so (at least privately to Gallup's pollsters). Women of all classes and income levels were also aware of the ways in which gender shaped their lives. Sixty-seven percent of all women favored a strong women's movement. Pollsters consistently found that more African-American women approved of the goals of the women's movement than did white women. A 1989 poll found that 51percent of all men, 64 percent of white women, 72 percent of Hispanic women, and 85 percent of African-American women agreed with the statement, "The United States continues to need a strong women's movement to push for changes that benefit women."

By then, there was no single movement. But the growth of gender consciousness had altered society and culture in countless ways. In August 1980, a *New York Times* editorial declared that the women's movement, once viewed as a group of "extremists and troublemakers," had turned into an "effective political force." The editorial concluded "that the battle for women's rights is no longer lonely or peripheral. It has moved where it belongs; to the center of American politics." In 1985, commenting on legislation that would support child support for all families and that would give wives access to their husbands' pensions, another editorial declared that " 'Women's Issues' have already become everyone's." And so they had. Perhaps the most important legacy was precisely that "women's issues" had entered mainstream national politics, where they had changed the terms of political debate.

Everyday life had also changed in small but significant ways. Strangers addressed a woman as Ms; meteorologists named hurricanes after both men and women; schoolchildren learned about sexism before they became teenagers; language became more gender-neutral; popular culture saturated society with comedies, thrillers, and mysteries that turned on changing gender roles; and two decades after the movement's first years, the number of women politicians doubled. Even more significantly, millions of women had entered jobs that had once been reserved for men. Although women had not gained the power to change institutions, they had joined men in colleges and universities in unprecedented numbers. In the 1950s, women

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constituted only 20 percent of college undergraduates, and their two most common aspirations were to become the wife of a prominent man and the mother of several accomplished children. By 1990, women constituted 54 percent of undergraduates and they wanted to do anything and everything. Women had also joined men in both blue-collar and professional jobs in startling numbers. In 1960, 35 percent of women had worked outside the home; by 1990, that figure had jumped to 58 percent. During the same period, the number of female lawyers and judges leaped from 7,500 to 108,200; and female doctors from 15,672 to 174,000.

The cumulative impact of decades of revelations, education, debates, scandals, controversies, and high-profile trials raised women's gender consciousness, which in turn eventually showed up in a long-awaited political "gender gap." In 1871, Susan B. Anthony had prematurely predicted that once women got the right to vote, they would vote as a bloc. A gender gap did not appear until 1980, when more men than women voted for Ronald Reagan, whose opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion may have moved some women into the Democratic column. Eventually the gender gap would cause at least a (temporary) realignment of national politics. In 1996, some 16 percent more women than men voted for Bill Clinton for president. Some political analysts now believed that women were voting their interests as workers, family caregivers, or as single or divorced mothers.

Gender gap or not, the rightward tilt of American politics led to the demonization of poor women and their children. As some middle-class women captured meaningful and well-paid work, ever more women slid into poverty and homelessness, which, on balance, the women's movement did too little, too late, to change. On the other hand, the lives of many ordinary working women, who had not become impoverished, improved in dramatic ways. In 1992 a *Newsweek* article described how twenty years of the women's movement had changed Appleton, Wisconsin (the home town of Joseph McCarthy and the John Birch Society). Women, the magazine reported, had taken on significant roles in local politics. In Appleton, "There are women cops and women firefighters, and there are women in managerial jobs in local business and government. There is firm community consensus, and generous funding with local tax dollars, for Harbor House, a shelter for battered women. And there is an active effort, in the Appleton public schools, to eliminate the invidious stereotyping that keeps young women in the velvet straitjacket of traditional gender roles." Meanwhile, women in other parts of the globe, fueled by international conferences, began challenging different forms of patriarchal authority and inventing feminism all over again.

Each generation of women activists leaves an unfinished agenda for the next. First Wave suffragists fought for women's citizenship and created international organizations dedicated to universal disarmament, but left many customs and beliefs unchallenged. Second Wave feminists questioned nearly everything, transformed much of American culture, expanded the idea of democracy by insisting that equality had to include its women citizens, and catapulted women's issues onto a global stage. Their greatest accomplishment was to change the terms of debate, so that women mattered. But they left much unfinished as well. They were unable to change most institutions, to gain economic justice for poor women, or even to convince society that child care is the responsibility of the whole society. As a result, American women won the right to "have it all," but only if "they did it all."

It is for a new generation to identify what it needs to achieve greater equality. As we enter a new century, it is wise to remember that the struggle for women's human rights has just begun. As each generation shares its secrets, women learn to see the world through their own eyes, and discover, much to their surprise, that their problems are not theirs alone. The poet Muriel Rukeyser once asked, "What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life?" Her answer: "The world would split open." And, so it has. A revolution is underway and there is no end in sight. ●

RUTH ROSEN is a history professor at the University of California, Davis. Her most recent book is *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America.*

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Not Your Parents' Protest

Barbara Epstein

THE UNEXPECTED size and militance of last year's mobilization against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle, the police attack on overwhelmingly nonviolent demonstrators, the tear gas in the air, all invite comparisons with the movements of the sixties, especially the antiwar movement of the late sixties and early seventies. It is tempting for those of us old enough to remember that period to see in the Seattle mobilization, and whatever may follow it, an opportunity to replay the movements of the sixties. In fact there are major differences between the two, and many of those differences are to the advantage of the new movement.

The most important difference is that movements of the sixties, especially the antiwar movement, were directed against the state; the Seattle mobilization was directed against the global corporations. In the sixties, the civil rights movement blamed the U. S. government for the discrepancy between democratic rhetoric and the denial of the rights of citizens to blacks. The movement demanded that the state ensure equal rights. Many left activists of the sixties understood that the state was intertwined with the corporations; in 1966 Carl Oglesby, then president of the Students for a Democratic Society, described the system that the movement opposed as "corporate liberalism," and pointed out that liberals in power were pursuing policies designed to protect the interests of corporations. Radical intellectuals traced corporate influences on government policy. But it was the liberals who were the focus of the movement's attack.

The enmity of sixties radicalism to the liberal state had some unfortunate side effects. Though at first Oglesby and others carefully distinguished between the liberal rhetoric used by the state to manipulate popular consent and the authentic liberal values of reformers, as the war in Vietnam expanded and anger at the government rose, these distinctions tended to slip away. Antiwar activists began to use "liberal" as a term of abuse and to measure their own radicalism by how far they had moved from their own recently liberal politics. The movement's tendency to cast radicalism and liberalism as polar opposites made alliances between radicals and liberals difficult. But despite these problems, the movement's view of the liberal state as the enemy made sense. The war in Vietnam was being conducted by liberals in power who defended it with their own cold war rhetoric. One of the contributions of the movements of the sixties was to expose the hollowness of cold war liberalism.

THE COALITION that opposed the WTO in Seattle was held together by a common perception of global corporations as the main threat to environmental standards, labor and human rights, and to democracy generally. There were differences among the various constituencies in Seattle over how far the critique of the corporations should go, and what solutions should be proposed to growing corporate power. Radicals in the direct action movement and left-leaning environmental and human rights groups argued that the WTO should be abolished; more mainstream environmental and human rights organizations, and trade unionists, argued for reforming the WTO. Some among these groups want the powers of the WTO restricted. Others, including many union people, want the WTO strengthened, so that it can enforce labor standards across national boundaries. This would require that the WTO become more responsive to labor and other popular movements, and that its ties to corporations be loosened.

The WTO has enormous power over the policies of not only its member nations but any

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nation that hopes to be admitted to the circuits of global trade. The question of what demands the movement should make on the WTO has important consequences. But the debates among opponents and critics of the WTO over what should be done with it also stand in for disagreements with broader ramification. On the one hand, the WTO functions as a metaphor for the global corporate order as a whole, which the radicals want to dismantle, and which others hope can be brought in line with democracy. The debate over the powers of the WTO stands in for differences over whether the defense of democracy requires a strengthened nation-state or is best pursued by new international organizations.

In the sixties, especially as anger about the war intensified, differences between radicals and liberals tended to be hostile and divisive, with each side digging in its heels. The differences in Seattle over what should be done with the WTO and global corporations were friendly and fluid. Many of the people whom I talked with, from labor, mainstream environmental movements, and the direct action movement, agreed that no one has the answer to the question of how the global economy should be reorganized, and discussion of these issues must continue. Kevin Danaher of Global Exchange, a left-leaning human rights organization in San Francisco, argues that the movement must drive a wedge between the state and the corporations, and put pressure on the state to defend democracy against corporate power. This approach was exemplified in Seattle, where President Clinton felt compelled to move from statements expressing vague support for the protesters to a call for a code of labor rights and sanctions against nations that violated them. Clinton's aides quickly denied that he meant what he had said, but his waffling added to the legitimacy, and no doubt the influence, of the protest.

The second major difference between the mobilization in Seattle and the movements of the sixties, especially the antiwar movement, is that the former involved a coalition between progressive groups, including young radicals, and labor, while labor was for the most part absent from the movements of the sixties, and supported the war in Vietnam, creating the deepest rift with its progressive sometime allies in U.S. history. There has not been a labor-left alliance in the United States since the thirties, when communists and socialists played a major role in organizing the Congress of Industrial Organizations and leftists, liberals, and trade unionists joined forces in demanding greater rights for poor and working people. Together they put sufficient pressure on the government to shift the New Deal to the left. The left/liberal/labor alliance of the thirties created a national political culture in which there was room to promote egalitarian values. The movements of the sixties had something of the same effect despite rifts with labor and liberals, because their critiques of the war, and of racism and sexism, struck responsive chords, especially among youth. But since the end of the war in Vietnam the divisions between progressive groups and labor, and for that matter among progressive groups, have weakened the left and allowed the right to dominate public discourse. The mobilization in Seattle holds out the hope, for the first time in decades, of a broad and potentially powerful coalition for a more egalitarian social order.

In Seattle, relations among trade unionists, environmentalists, and direct actionists seem to have been governed by a spirit of respect and mutual support that I do not remember from the sixties.

The tactics of the radical and the more mainstream groups were complementary. The impact of the mobilization resulted from the combination of two kinds of nonviolent protest: the blockade by the direct actionists, which delayed the beginning of the ministerial conference and brought media attention, and the labor march, which demonstrated the breadth of opposition to the WTO and lent the tactics of the young radicals legitimacy. In the sixties, relations between young radicals and trade unionists tended to range from edgy to confrontational. The Seattle mobilization, with its well-orchestrated collaboration between trade unionists and young radicals, contrasts sharply with the attack by construction workers on a New York antiwar march in May 1970.

The exhilarating spirit of solidarity among

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the protesters in Seattle was not only a response to the police attack but also an expression of the ties built between labor and environmental groups over several years of joint opposition to free-trade legislation. Trade unionists put on sea turtle costumes; the International Longshore Workers Union (ILWU) shut down the West Coast ports, from San Diego to Vancouver, in support of the protest. The mobilization also drew on a widespread anger at the WTO and the corporate power that it represents, attracting many more protesters than the sponsoring organizations had expected. In the streets of Seattle people felt what it is like to be part of a movement. Those who participated in the Seattle mobilization are not likely to forget that acting in coalition enhances collective power. The Seattle mobilization linked labor and environmental demands; it is unlikely that these will be set against each other again. The willingness of trade unionists to ally themselves with young radicals suggests that the days when the fear of association with the left can be used to divide a movement may be over.

THERE IS ONE difference between the Seattle mobilization and the movements of the sixties, especially the antiwar movement, that weighs against the prospects of a new mass movement. The war in Vietnam forced itself on the attention of the American people. Young people in particular could not ignore it. The growth of corporate power has not yet created the sort of crisis that thrusts whole sectors of the population into collective action in the way that the war did. Over the last few decades the division between the rich and everyone else has widened, and most people have found themselves working longer hours, in many cases at less secure jobs. But the large amounts of money that some people earn have led many to fasten their hopes on upward mobility and construct lives oriented around consumption. Many of those who took part in direct action in Seattle are part of a youth subculture that opposes corporate power, and capitalism generally, because it has created a society in which virtually everything has become a commodity. These young people want community, and they want meaningful lives in the context of an egalitarian society. There is no guarantee that these views will spread, but the fact that there is a youth culture that holds such values is one of the most encouraging lessons of the Seattle mobilization.

The Vietnam War brought together a range of progressive movements previously concerned with separate issues. Among others, it brought together northern white students and black activists, many of them veterans of the civil rights movement, around a shared opposition to the war. Today's progressive movements may not come together as easily. The trade unions brought the most racial diversity to the WTO protest. The ILWU is one of the nation's most racially diverse unions, due both to the number of African Americans and others who joined in the years after World War II and to a left leadership that has emphasized

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the importance of radical history. And there was substantial participation by public sector unions such as the Service Employees and private sector unions such as the Hotel and Restaurant Workers, both of which are quite diverse. But the union participation in the Seattle mobilization was largely white, and the environmental and direct action groups were even whiter. The environmental movement, once virtually all white, now has an environmental justice wing that is composed predominately of people of color. But the groups concerned with trade and international issues are overwhelmingly white, as is the direct action movement. There were young people of color among the blockaders, but on the whole they tend not to be drawn to this movement. The subculture associated with direct action encourages aloofness from corporate culture, if not dropping out. They are rarely enthusiastic about forgoing whatever opportunities they may have. Young people of color also may have doubts about consensus politics in the context of a majority white movement.

If the Seattle mobilization was behind the movements of the sixties in respect to racial diversity, it was ahead of those movements in age diversity. The movements of the sixties were almost exclusively movements of young people in their teens, twenties, or at most early thirties. The Seattle mobilization drew protesters from high school students through seniors, with the largest numbers in their teens through middle age. With the exception of a small number of young people given disproportionate attention by the media, these groups were united not only by their opposition to WTO and their anger at corporate power but also by their commitment to nonviolence. Each of the movements in the anti-WTO coalition included people of a range of ages, but the fact that most of the blockaders were young, and the larger numbers of middle-aged people among the labor and mainstream environmental organizations, meant that the mobilization was not only a coalition of organizations but an alliance of generations. If an anticorporate movement emerges from Seattle, it seems likely that young people will be at its forefront but that it will include people of all ages. ●

BARBARA EPSTEIN teaches in the history of consciousness department at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

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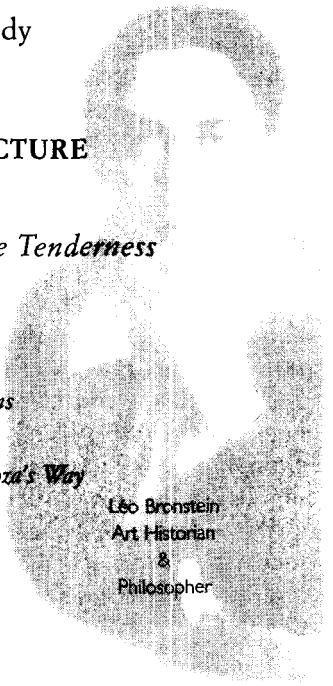

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Ending Isolationism

Alice H. Amsden

THE PERFECT battle can't be picked. However flawed politically, the confrontation inspired by the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle this past December had enough going for it to be worthy of progressives' support. The growing hegemony of business, the rising power of Wall Street, and the disregard for democratic decision making by international bodies like the WTO, all made Seattle fair ground for a fight. Now, however, socialists have to refine the terms on which they oppose *and support* globalism. Some of the tendencies represented in Seattle were progressive while others were patently reactionary.

Seattle wasn't the perfect battle because issues were not drawn neatly along class lines. Globalism may have become monolithic, but the interests of the same class tended to differ depending on the country—low income, high income, and middle income ("emerging economies").

The low-income countries were possibly the most disappointed by the failure of the WTO to advance the cause of free trade. Without a manufacturing sector to fear foreign competition, these countries have everything to gain from open markets for their agricultural exports, which continue to meet protectionist barriers in the advanced countries, whether Japan, the European Union (EU) or the United States.

The middle-income countries, ranging from Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico; Turkey, India, and China; and Korea, Thailand, and Taiwan, have experienced an industrial revolution since the 1950s based on protectionism, government interventions disciplined by performance standards, and exporting. While real manufacturing earnings in some countries have stagnated (between 1969 and 1990 they fell by -0.1 percent in Argentina and -0.8 percent in Mexico), in other countries wages have soared at annual rates unprecedented in world history: for example, 5.1 percent in Indonesia, 5.6 percent in Brazil, 7.8 percent in Korea and 8.5 percent in Taiwan. The emerging economies now produce not only a large share of the world's labor-intensive manufactures, such as textiles (36 percent) and shoes (44 percent), but also a large and rapidly growing share of its more technologically advanced and capital-intensive products, such as semiconductors (market share depends on the type of chip) and steel (around 30 percent). These more sophisticated products are made in the world's newest, most efficient factories, many of them owned by nationals of emerging economies. Nationally owned firms have staged the first serious competitive challenge to entrenched multinational companies.

The American government's knee-jerk response to "The Rise of the Rest" was to force open their markets and buttress trade barriers at home. Threatened with real foreign competition in textiles, steel, automobiles, machine tools, and semiconductors, the U.S. government imposed "voluntary" export restraints on trading partners. If insufficient, a threatened industry could always weep in Washington until "anti-dumping" duties were introduced. Congress passed an aggressive Super 301 Omnibus Trade Act that gave the United States power to accuse, try, convict, and punish foreign countries whose major crime was being more efficient than American manufacturers.

The Lesser Evil?

Like low-income countries, middle-income countries were generally disappointed by Seattle because they regard the WTO as the lesser of two evils. They prefer the transparent procedures of the WTO to the arbitrary practices of the U.S. courts and Congress. For all

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the opprobrium heaped on the WTO, moreover, it is hardly a free trade paragon (if it were, few countries except maybe Hong Kong would have joined).

Ironically, the laws of the WTO are barely more market-oriented than those of GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), the WTO's predecessor that emerged from Keynesian postwar institution-building and won the support of American and European social democrats. The WTO prohibits voluntary export restraints, but governments can still intervene to protect their infant industries, their embattled sectors, and their bruised balance of payments, as both the United States and the emerging economies have abundantly shown. Although the WTO prohibits export subsidies (at Washington's insistence), it condones state subsidies to both research and development (the U.S. national innovation system would collapse without help from the Department of Defense and National Institute of Health) and to regional development (otherwise, Europe's poor regions would balk and American subsidization of business at the state level would crumble).

By the 1990s, middle-income countries feared free access to their markets by foreign *investors*, not foreign *exporters*, but in 1998 the big push by the United States for scot-free foreign investment was blocked by the EU. The emerging economies' worst nightmare, which left all developing countries sleepless in Seattle, was the protectionism posed by lofty and largely self-serving American demands for universal labor standards—demands that lie at the heart of the American left's approach to globalism. Here's what Luis Felipe Lampreia, a representative of Brazil's social democratic government had to say on the subject of labor rights, a position echoed by governments ranging from democratic India to authoritarian China:

> Nobody's for child labor. Come on, who is for slave labor? Who wants to have prison work? I mean, nobody can condone that or accept that. But our fear is not that. Our fear is that because our workmen have lower salaries, they will be eventually punished for that, because they become a danger to the jobs of richer workers. I think (American labor leaders) have their own case in mind, you know, and they want to protect their own thing, and they will go to any lengths, using the labor questions, to create a protectionist setup if necessary.

The EU had a more internationalist position than the United States in Seattle, as stated by Pascal Lamy, the EU's representative to the WTO, so the labor standards issue fizzled:

> The difference [between the EU and U.S. position] is the number of standards. We're addressing the five core conventions which the International [Labor] Organization has put forward, and which have been ratified, and which have to do with child labor, with forced labor, and with the possibility of people to (form) unions. This is what we're talking about. We're not talking about other labor standards [as the United States is doing]. Second, the EU position is that linking trade and labor is not a matter of sanctions [the way it is for the United States].*

The Left Positions

The American left's position has been identical to that of the Democratic Party on labor standards and has been staunchly anti-global in general—for better or worse. For better, the left has been a consistent opponent of free financial markets, championing capital controls and constraints on Wall Street's power and the IMF's emergency measures when capital markets quake. This position can only be applauded. Financial instability is inherent in capitalism, but financial deregulation in the past decades has made matters worse. Financial services are a growing segment of the U.S. economy, and scale economies force financial service providers to internationalize. The Democratic Party's total political capitulation to financial interests, however, has been disgraceful. The left has played an important role, academically and otherwise, in exposing the dangers of global financial liberalization.

Far worse, the American left has been an arch opponent of any policies that compromise the position of American workers, whether or not these policies are at the expense of foreign

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workers or obstruct the "forces of production" from further development. The justification for such policies has been rhetorical, that the interests of American and foreign workers coincide, as in the case of labor standards, and that international competition creates a "race to the bottom."

The left's lobbying for labor standards has been packaged as part of its fight against emerging economies' "export-led" growth. Instead of pumping out exports, emerging economies are supposed to adopt labor practices that raise domestic wages and hence, domestic demand, which can then substitute for exporting. This reasoning is logical but wholly unrealistic. The vast majority of developing countries have extremely small domestic markets because they are poor. In 1990, for example, Korea had a population of roughly forty million people but a gross national product that was smaller than that of the Netherlands. This was in spite of democratization and world-record wage increases for over two prior decades, as noted above. The gross domestic product of the Netherlands was three times larger than that of Indonesia, although the population and land mass of the Netherlands were a mere fraction of those of its former colony.

In fact, whether an emerging economy is "outward" or "inward" oriented, or unionized or non-unionized, doesn't seem to matter much for its treatment from American progressives. The Indian textile industry is probably *more* unionized than the American textile industry, with costs only a fraction of those of U.S. suppliers. Yet one does not feel a great groundswell of support in the United States to "Buy Indian," just as one does not feel a great ground-swell of support in India to "Adopt American labor standards," which, apart from wages, may be inferior to those in Indian mills.

Race to the Bottom?

Pseudo-protectionist policies have been justified by American socialists on the grounds that globalism entails a "race to the bottom." Mark Levinson notes ("Who's in Charge Here?" *Dissent*, Fall 1999) that the number of people living on less than a dollar a day increased by two hundred million in the 1990s. But he fails to mention that because capitalist development is uneven, the living standards of workers in some countries have steadily risen—especially in those emerging economies that eschewed free market policies and developed their own modern industries and global firms.

The "race to the bottom" has largely played itself out *within* the United States, where until very recently wages have stagnated. American wages failed to rise since the mid-1970s in tandem with a growing labor supply, slow productivity growth, and a sharp decline in unionization. The share of union members among American wage and salary workers was 20.1 percent in 1983 (36.7 percent in the public sector and 16.5 percent in the private sector). By 1998, unionization had fallen to only 13.9 percent (37.5 percent in the public sector and 9.5 percent in the private sector). Given the right's political ascendance, the real minimum wage (in constant 1996 dollars) has *fallen* steadily over time from a high of $7.21 in 1968 to a low of $4.24 in 1989 (up to a mere $4.75 in 1996).

It is hotly debated whether foreign trade has dampened domestic wages. The share of imports in U.S. GDP rose from around 5 percent in 1980 to a little more than 10 percent in 2000. But a crisis in unionization and a domestic "race to the bottom" clearly preceded the "Rise of the Rest." Foreign trade, therefore, can't be used as an excuse for retrograde isolationism

If progressives in the United States are not to go down in history as die-hard nationalists, they have to abandon their rearguard actions to stem the tide of global capitalist development in defense of their own labor elite. If steel can be produced more cheaply in India than in the United States, why shouldn't the U.S. steel industry fold, given that the "adult" protection it has received for decades has proved insufficient to enable it to compete? There are grounds for fighting aggressively for due compensation for redundant steel workers, but there are no grounds inherent in any socialist principles to justify the exclusion of foreign steel from the United States, or agricultural products from Japan, or coal from Belgium. In the long run, socialists will merely manage their way to political obscurity if they champion pro-

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tectionist policies toward old industries, however disguised as labor standards.

Irony of Globalism

As socialists re-examine their political agenda, critique of capitalism, and socialist ideals in the wake of the abortive socialist experiment, their global policies have to change. The often conflicting interests of American and foreign workers have to be acknowledged. The guiding principle—in practice—has to become the promotion of economic growth and social welfare within *and* beyond American borders. Toward this end, a curious irony of globalism needs to be explored.

As the world economy has become more integrated, *regional* trade has become stronger, leading to three economic blocs: north- and southeast Asia, the EU, and the Americas. North American progressives have complained that the United States has become the "importer of last resort," but the truth is just the opposite. Because of American protectionism and fast growth in emerging economies, trade and foreign investment have tended to explode *among* "The Rest," creating a decentralization of global economic power. In 1970, Korea and Taiwan exported almost half their manufactures to the United States, but now about half their exports go to other Asian countries. The United States accounts for barely one-quarter of their total exports, and the same pattern applies in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand. With the exception of Mexico, which trades almost exclusively with the United States, local Latin American trade has also soared, as has intra-European trade, including trade with Turkey. Every cluster has its major economic powers: Japan (vying with China) in Asia, Germany in Europe, and the United States in the Americas.

This process of decentralization should be strongly supported. Regional currency systems to sustain regional trade flows, such as the Euro, Europe's new currency, are likely to reduce global financial instability. The rise of new centers of economic power may be expected to reduce the economic hegemony and hence arbitrary power of any single country. The knee-jerk reaction of Washington to decentralization has thus far been negative—to wit, Japan's proposal for an Asian International Monetary Fund (IMF) was squelched. But such a proposal represents a healthy antidote to the Washington IMF, and won't go away. Smaller countries favor the formation of an Asian IMF and Asian currency system and will pressure Japan and China to reach an accord.

There will be more NAFTAs (North American Free Trade Agreement). Chile has already proposed a free trade agreement with the United States. Argentina has tied its economy tightly to that of the United States by forming a currency board, in which the U.S. dollar and Argentine peso are exchanged freely at a fixed price. The "dollarization" of Ecuador is underway.

How should American progressives respond to such proposals? They can stick their heads in the sand and continue to oppose them, or they can use integration to create new, more socially and economically progressive political entities. The terms demanded for integration can be self-serving and wildly unrealistic (as were demands designed to stop NAFTA, such as the same American and Mexican minimum wage). Or they can be structured to create the basis for future political democratization and economic growth (as in Turkey's admission into the European Union).

Five years after the conclusion of NAFTA, neither the American nor Mexican economy has exhibited much change. The effect of NAFTA on U.S. jobs has been nil, possibly because the American business cycle has been highly expansionary. Whatever new Mexican employment is being generated has tended to be associated with NAFTA, but the number of new jobs has not been spectacular. In the future, however, things could get better from a progressive point of view. The Latin American economies have some of the most unequal income distributions in the world, just as income distribution in the United States tends to be unequal compared with that of Europe's social democracies. There is abundant need for social change in both North and South America. Closer political, economic, and intellectual integration may be conducive to more fundamental restructuring in the long run. ●

ALICE AMSDEN is a professor of political economy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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The Year of Living Anxiously

China's 1999

Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom

A YEAR AGO, two unexpected incidents, one involving an international crisis and the other a domestic one, each associated with protests, sent shock waves through China and provoked surprising responses by the Beijing regime. Taken together, these incidents and the reactions to them made 1999 the most confusing year of the decade for China specialists to figure out. We saw many departures from what seemed to be settled post-1989 patterns. The very unpredictability of the year, however, conformed to a long-term pattern. Years ending with the numeral nine have often been trying ones for Chinese regimes, the fall of the Nationalist Party in 1949 being the most famous case in point. Nineteen ninety-nine was no exception.

As we start the year 2000, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) shows no sign of following soon in the footsteps of its erstwhile rival, but recent events show that the CCP is still dealing with the legitimacy crisis that both caused and was exacerbated by the demonstrations of 1989. The CCP is in much the same predicament now that it was in at the start of 1990: struggling to reposition itself so as to hold onto power at a time when few Leninist regimes remain on the world scene. In addition, now as a decade ago, it must contend with a populace that is skeptical about the official ideology, doubtful about the moral character of top government leaders, and has recently been reacquainted with a potent repertoire of political street theater. Looking at the surprises of 1999 and how official responses to them diverged from post-1989 patterns can be useful to us as we enter the second decade of the "New World Disorder" and the CCP starts the second decade of its ongoing legitimacy crisis.

I will begin with the two main unexpected incidents of 1999. The first, which occurred on April 25, was a sit-in staged by some ten thousand members of Falun Gong, a spiritual group that extols the virtues of special breathing practices and physical movements that are said to have curative powers, and that incorporates into its creed beliefs derived from a variety of Chinese folk religious traditions. The surprising response to the sect's sit-in came only in July when the CCP announced a ban on Falun Gong gatherings, and then began to arrest members of the group. Accompanying this crackdown was a media campaign, involving everything from political posters to comic books, designed to discredit Li Hongzhi, Falun Gong's China-born but now New York-based leader.

The second important, unexpected event came in early May when NATO missiles destroyed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, killing a trio of China journalists. The surprising response in this case came immediately. The regime reversed its nearly decade-long policy of discouraging all forms of student activism and allowed, even encouraged, students to take to the streets to express patriotic outrage. In this case, too, a mass media publicity campaign was launched. Officially sponsored instant histories detailing the horrors of the bombing raid and celebrating the demonstrations by Chinese students were issued. These included everything from photographs of campus wall posters mocking President Clinton to reprints of emotional speeches by CCP leaders decrying NATO's abuse of human rights. Video disks were produced containing television footage of state-sponsored funerals for the three "revolutionary martyrs" of Belgrade and of anti-American rallies outside consular buildings—the latter made to seem less rowdy affairs than the one I witnessed at close range in Beijing on the evening of May 9.

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The Falun Gong sit-in and the destruction of the Chinese Embassy are usually discussed separately, which makes sense given the obvious differences between the events, one nonviolent, the other part of a war. Unfortunately, the regime's responses to the two are also treated as unrelated. In fact, however, they were part of the same dynamic. And the two publicity campaigns have even more in common.

In each case the CCP leadership took risky moves to minimize a potential threat to its legitimacy. The two publicity campaigns represent parallel efforts to shore up the regime's position by criticizing the ethics and motivations of a particular group (Falun Gong, NATO) and a specific individual (Li Hongzhi, President Clinton). These organizations and individuals were described—in the case of Li and Falun Gong still are being described—as serious threats to the well-being of the Chinese nation. And the negative traits projected onto them are precisely those that, in recent years, have often been projected onto the CCP leadership by its domestic and international critics. In anti-Falun Gong comic books, for example, Li is shown as a charlatan who cares only about maximizing his own power and wealth, not about the welfare of his followers or even his sect's creed. In a typical illustration, he is pictured standing next to a fancy car with big denomination bills—presumably contributed by hoodwinked followers—falling all around him. Similarly, Clinton was presented as someone who paid lip service to human rights but had no qualms about treating his enemies brutally.

These CCP responses suggest that the regime lives in fear of specters that, if allowed to materialize, could end its rule. The decision to use force ten years ago and then mount a propaganda campaign that justified all acts of repression can be seen as responses to the specter of the Polish workers' movement Solidarity. The 1999 decisions to support the anti-NATO demonstrators, to arrest members of Falun Gong, and to carry out intensive publicity campaigns to celebrate the student activists and denigrate Li Hongzhi's followers were all similarly motivated. This time, however, the specters haunting the regime came from China's own past.

This is not to say that the Solidarity specter has lost its power to frighten China's leaders. The efforts made during the anti-NATO protests to limit the involvement of angry workers who wanted to join the students shows that there is still great concern with cross-class alliances linked to mass movements. In 1999 as opposed to 1989, however, the Solidarity specter was not the main one feared by the regime. More panic was inspired by what might best be called the "May 4 specter," named for a 1919 student-led movement that targeted government ministers viewed as corrupt and insufficiently patriotic. And also by the "religious revolt specter"—recalling the many times in China's pre-revolutionary era when a change of dynasties was associated with the rising influence of spiritual sects led by charismatic figures. A concern with the first of these was a key factor in motivating the regime to support the anti-NATO protests, and understanding this helps make sense of the publicity campaign aimed at denigrating Clinton and linking the CCP leadership to patriotic protesters and martyrs. A concern with the second specter, on the other hand, was a key factor behind the CCP decision to move against Falun Gong last July.

Before describing the specters in more detail, let me clarify a point: though my argument is that the CCP's reactions to the anti-NATO protests and the Falun Gong sit-in were surprising, this does not mean they were unprecedented. Nineteen ninety-nine was not the first year in which Chinese Communist Party leaders had encouraged anti-imperialist demonstrations by students. In the 1950s, they called on students to hold "Resist America, Support Korea" marches; in the 1960s, student demonstrators gathered, with Chairman Mao's blessing, to protest imperialism; and in 1985 some official support was given to campus rallies decrying perceived Japanese slights to China's honor. The crackdown on Falun Gong has even more precedents from earlier periods in the regime's history. There was nothing novel about the CCP mounting an intense publicity campaign to discredit a group it deemed dangerous to stability and to socialism. And this is

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not the first time that such a war of words and images has been accompanied by mass arrests. The same thing happened during the anti-rightist purges of the 1950s and in the weeks following the June massacres that took place in Beijing and Chengdu in 1989.

What made the responses of the regime to the anti-NATO protests and to Falun Gong surprising, therefore, was not their novelty within the overall sweep of the regime's history, but rather their break with 1990s patterns. Before 1999, the decade had been unusually free of officially sanctioned "campaigns." The key question then is how to explain the recent change of course—and it is here that thinking about specters is most valuable. It provides a link between the responses to protest in 1989 and in 1999.

Faced with massive gatherings on the streets of many cities in May of 1989, one of the first moves the regime made was to impose martial law, hoping that this would stem the tide of revolt as similar moves had in Poland in 1981. When this did not work, the CCP leadership turned to brute force, most notably in Beijing's June 4 Massacre, an event that took place, ironically, on the very day that Solidarity was winning the first free Polish elections in decades. It was no accident that workers, who the government feared might soon form more effective alliances with protesting students, were the main victims of state violence in Beijing and also in Chengdu, nor that labor leaders received some of the longest prison terms handed out in the immediate aftermath of the killing.

The regime fought the Solidarity specter throughout the years leading up to 1999. It prohibited all forms of student activism, punished swiftly and harshly anyone who tried to organize a formal opposition organization, and banned autonomous labor unions that brought together workers from more than a single factory or district. And right up to May of 1999, the CCP routinely denied permits to students requesting permission to hold mass political gatherings of any sort. This was done even when the students involved wanted to hold anti-imperialist rallies to protest presumed slights on China's national pride. Thus the regime refused to allow campus rallies to protest Japanese claims to the disputed Diaoyu Islands, fearing that, once gathered together, students might bring up other grievances. This ban on student demonstrations was periodically coupled with moves against dissidents who tried to form political groups, such as the China Democratic Party.

The CCP leadership also took positive steps to defuse the power of the Solidarity specter. Aware of the role that shortages of material goods and a perception of economic backwardness played in bringing down communist regimes in Europe, Beijing put a great deal of energy into achieving (and drawing attention to) high growth rates. And, especially after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, it highlighted the problems encountered by the former Leninist states in Europe. To counteract any notion that the end of Communist Party rule was an inevitable and good thing for the citizens of the nations involved, the Beijing leadership made much of the political and economic devastation that had come to Russia and Yugoslavia. Publicizing the sufferings and loss of power in the international arena of these countries, and saying little about the smoother transitions taking place in Central Europe, the CCP made a new kind of case for itself. You may have lost faith in our ideology and you may question the morality of our leaders, the regime argued, but the alternative to our rule may well be even worse for you and for China.

The government tried as well to do specific things to alleviate the discontent that triggered the 1989 protests and allow citizens to let off steam. It made an effort to limit its interference in the private lives of ordinary people, and it gave signs that it was willing to tolerate various oppositional or at least nonconformist activities, so long as these did not directly threaten the CCP's main policies or overall political dominance. Small-scale protests by workers or farmers with very specific grievances were allowed, intellectuals were given the freedom to publish literary reviews that veered far from the Party line on cultural affairs, hotlines were set up so that urban residents could voice complaints about local issues, and so on. The watchword became, as one person put it to me

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in 1996, "As long as it is not a movement, anything goes."

The turning point quality of 1999 lies in the extent to which this watchword was overruled. Falun Gong has never been a clearly defined movement, after all, and many of its followers see its main impact in affecting the way they act in private; yet it has been attacked. The anti-NATO protests, on the other hand, certainly constituted a movement of sorts—a student-led one at that—and yet it was endorsed. So, we come back to two basic questions: Why the sudden break last year from the established pattern of treating all forms of student activism as potentially dangerous? And why the rhetorical and physical attacks on Falun Gong—attacks of a sort that, since the crackdown of 1989, had been reserved for groups that explicitly opposed a major CCP policy (such as its stance on Tibet) or openly attacked the regime's authority?

Answering these questions brings us back to the May 4 and religious revolt specters, and the way each haunts the regime. I've named the former for the upheaval of eighty years ago that began when students in Beijing, and soon in other cities too, took to the streets to protest terms of the Treaty of Versailles transferring sovereignty over parts of China formerly under German control to Japan. China as well as Japan had fought on the side of the allies in World War I, so this territory, the students claimed, should rightfully be returned to Chinese rule. Though directed against the nations involved in framing the Treaty of Versailles, Japan in particular, this movement was also from the beginning an attack on the corrupt warlord regime in Beijing that students accused of failing to protect the nation's interest. The students singled out for special criticism the "Three Traitorous Officials," government ministers who, they claimed, showed a consistent willingness to make concessions to Japan in order to line their own pockets and retain their hold on power. The May 4 Movement soon developed into a multi-class alliance, with workers and merchants joining the struggle. It also became, after students were arrested and beaten up by police, a fight for the right of protest itself. Even though the Treaty of Versailles ultimately went into effect unchanged, the protesters achieved many of their central goals. All arrested students were released from jail, and each of the "Three Traitorous Officials" was dismissed from his post.

The May 4 Movement is enshrined in CCP official history as one of the most sacred moments in the long revolution that culminated in the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. One of the main monuments in Tiananmen Square is dedicated to the memory of May 4 activists, and the anniversary of this struggle is celebrated with considerable fanfare each spring. Particular attention is paid to it in years that end with a nine. Throughout early May in these years, official newspapers are filled with editorials and stories extolling the heroism of the students of 1919, as well as calls to contemporary youth to show that they too are committed patriots. But in the new situation of post-1949 China, it is said, the way to do this is not by holding protests but by studying hard to help build socialism. From time to time, however, new generations put a dissenting spin on the official commemorative line. Most famously, in 1989, student activists gathered at Tiananmen Square on the seventieth anniversary of the 1919 struggle to call for a "New May 4 Movement" to challenge the latest group of corrupt officials endangering the nation. The power of the May 4 anniversary is one reason that years ending with nines, like 1999, are anxious ones for Chinese regimes.

In light of this, it is easy to see why the coming of the eightieth anniversary of the 1919 struggle generated a good deal of nervousness. On the one hand, the regime had no choice but to mark the occasion; on the other, it had every reason to want to avoid a replay of 1989. The uneasiness with which the CCP leadership awaited the arrival of this anniversary day—I was in China at the time, invited to Beijing University to take part in a May 4 commemorative conference—was almost tangible. So, too, was the sense of relief when the day passed with only minor incidents, such as the China Democratic Party's proclamation, issued from hiding, that it, not the CCP, had the best claim to continue the May 4 tradition.

The fact that the Chinese Embassy was destroyed just a few days later—when the

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events of 1919 were still fresh in the minds of CCP leaders and students alike—should be remembered when we try to make sense of what followed. Students were, in part because of the anniversary, primed to do something to demonstrate their patriotism, and this helps account for the speed with which they took to the streets after the news reached China. Members of the regime were, again in part because of the anniversary, thinking about moments in the past when leaders viewed as corrupt, as they know they are by many citizens, fell from power for failing to act decisively to protect the national interest. This helps explain why a quick decision was made to leap ahead of the movement, rather than run the risk of suppressing it—and so give protesters cause to combine anger at NATO with anger at the CCP. It also helps explain why the ensuing publicity drive placed such emphasis on linking leaders of the regime to patriotic symbols and insisting that it was foreign leaders, not Chinese ones, that had no respect for the people of China. In addition, playing on the American president's sex scandal, which was well known in China, both student wall posters and official publications made much of the fact that Clinton was someone who cared only about satisfying his own desires—whether for power or pleasure. One student poster reprinted in an instant history of the protests has Monica Lewinsky suggesting to Bill that it was dangerous to bomb the Chinese Embassy. The President responds that there is nothing to worry about because there are no traces of his DNA on any of the missiles.

If the May 4 specter's power to influence official behavior is the main thing to keep in mind when thinking about the anti-NATO protests, worries relating to the religious revolt specter are the key to making sense of the crackdown on Falun Gong. Throughout China's imperial period, popular sects that made use of religious traditions, including Buddhism and Taoism, were continually being formed. These groups often had charismatic leaders who promised adherents, as Li Hongzhi has promised his, that they would feel better physically and more fulfilled spiritually, if only they agreed to do certain things. Millenarianism was often a feature of these sects, as it is in Falun Gong: the current age is corrupt and will be followed by a purer one; only the faithful will be ideally positioned to take their place in the new cosmic order.

In most periods, these sects were quiescent and the state could take a live-and-let-live attitude toward them. In times of crisis, however, sectarian leaders sometimes put more emphasis on the millenarian side of their beliefs and encouraged their followers to rise up in rebellion to usher in the new epoch. Alternately, the state might fear this possibility and launch a kind of pre-emptive strike against a religious group, declaring it heterodox and illegal, and moving to disband it. Often, these two things would occur in tandem: fear of being suppressed could inspire a sect to become more militant, and moves to militancy could convince officials to take a less laissez-faire attitude toward it. The end result in several famous instances—but by no means in every instance of this cycle of repression and militancy—was the fall of the dynasty at the hands of chiliastic rebels. This result was especially likely if, as in the fourteenth century when the sect leader who founded the Ming Dynasty was gaining power, members of the bureaucratic class threw in their lot with the rebels.

Much about Falun Gong remains mysterious to those outside the group, but there are important parallels between it and some of the popular religious sects that made an impact on political life during the imperial era. There are novelties about the group—the use of Web sites and other new technologies of communication, for example—but it is easy to understand why CCP leaders would see Falun Gong as comparable in many ways to sects that rose up against weakened dynasties. Here, again, the awareness of historical precedents for contemporary protests is not an abstract thing. This is because popular uprisings like the one that brought the Ming Dynasty to power are celebrated as great moments in the nation's past, even though efforts are made to downplay the religious and emphasize the economic bases of imperial-era upheavals. Elizabeth Perry, director of Harvard's Fairbank Center, who was in Shanghai during the first stage of the campaign against Falun Gong, reported that a show celebrating the

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founder of the Ming Dynasty was even shown on television this last summer in China. According to Perry, a political scientist whose insightful essay on Falun Gong, "Reinventing the Wheel," is slated to appear in the *Harvard China Review*, the regime did not explicitly draw attention to the parallels between Li's group and millenarian sects of imperial times. Nonetheless, she claims, many of the people she spoke with in China looked at the campaign to discredit Falun Gong as driven by fear of what I have dubbed the religious revolt specter.

This helps explain why the relative quiescence of the sect has not been interpreted by the CCP leadership to mean that they need not worry about Falun Gong. It also helps explain why there has been such deep concern generated by the discovery that Li's followers include not just a broad cross-section of citizens but even some CCP cadres and officials.

Where does all this leave the CCP in the year 2000? Is it safe until 2009 when another round of tense anniversaries will be marked? In the short run, the 1999 change in strategy seems to have defused the threat of the May 4 specter. It also seems to have managed, for now, to keep the religious revolt specter at bay. And Solidarity is less of a threat than it was in 1989.

In the long run, however, things look very different, and only the most naive CCP leader imagines now that the regime will have a smooth ride to the end of the decade—or even feels confident that the year 2000 will conclude without some new crisis occurring. This is because none of the three specters discussed here have been completely exorcised, and there are ways they could come together. In fact, the greatest danger for the current regime lies in this possibility—that elements of two or three types of movements and sources of discontent will create a hybrid menace to the regime. A combining of forces is especially likely if the high economic growth rates of the last decade do not continue into the new century, if the gap between rich and poor groups and regions continues to grow, and if novel challenges arise in the international arena.

WHAT THIS means is that the new decade is starting much as the last one did: with nervousness on the part of the regime. The massive layoffs of the past few years—likely to be followed by still larger ones if China enters the World Trade Organization—have created an ever-growing pool of discontented workers. So the Solidarity specter still hovers on the horizon. In addition, though the CCP leadership succeeded in keeping student outrage at NATO from spinning out of control, the change of course regarding campus activism has served to provide a new generation of young people with hands-on training in the mounting of a mass movement. It is very possible, indeed likely, that at some point in the near future another series of student demonstrations will take place, which will not be as easy to control. The regime still has to worry about the May 4 specter. Finally, though Falun Gong shows no signs of emerging as the central focus of a nationwide rebellion, its members have demonstrated a willingness to take great personal risks to resist efforts to disband the sect and destroy Li's credibility. The familiar cycle of official suppression leading to increased militancy, and vice versa, is playing out once more: the religious revolt specter is still threatening. In sum, the regime is still haunted. It lives on borrowed time. ●

JEFFREY WASSERSTROM teaches Chinese history at Indiana Universiy. His *Human Rights and Revolution*, co-edited with Lynn Hunt and Marilyn Young, is forthcoming from Rowman and Littlefield.

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Austria: Jörg Haider's Grasp for Power

Rainer Bauböck

Many western liberals have always mistrusted the Austrian postwar conversion to liberal democracy, and recent political events appear to confirm their wariness. In the last year's general elections the right-wing populist Freedom Party (FP) won 27 percent of the vote, beating the conservative People's Party (VP), though by less than five hundred votes, and finishing in second place after the Social Democrats (SP). In January, the Conservatives provoked a final break with the SP, shattering the coalition that had ruled Austria for thirteen years. On February 4, they formed a new government with Jörg Haider's FP. Of course, right-wing parties of this kind have been electorally successful in other European states—three weeks after Haider's triumph, Christoph Blocher's SVP won 23 percent in the Swiss elections on a similar platform. What is unique about the Austrian case is the steadiness of the FP's ascent since 1986, the realistic possibility that it might become the strongest party in future elections, and the suicidal policies of Haider's political opponents.

As I write this, Austria has plunged into the deepest foreign policy crisis of its postwar history. In January, the other fourteen governments in the Council of the European Union (EU) took the unprecedented step of threatening a member state with the suspension of bilateral contacts and a radical downscaling of diplomatic relations. When the major political forces in Austria abandoned their attempt to keep Haider's party out of government, its ascent became a European concern. Paradoxically, shunning a member state is an important step forward in the process of European integration. There is nothing in the program of the new government that would jeopardize further economic integration or enlargement of the common market. But the EU has become a political project engaged in far-ranging legislative activity. A racist party in a national government participates also in governing the EU. Moreover, the EU is gradually moving toward common standards for fundamental rights and the treatment of minorities. The applicant states east of the former Iron Curtain will be tested by their performance in these areas. Putting Austria under quarantine draws a line. In the short run, this will make it difficult to cure the disease domestically. A bunker mentality provides fertile ground for Haider's politics of resentment. But in the long run, Austria cannot afford to remain isolated in Europe.

Haider's phenomenal success has led to three kinds of reaction. The first articulates Western doubts about Austria's liberal democratic credentials. Especially in Israel and the United States, the recent events have raised concern and anger but little surprise. Haider stands for the ugly side of Austria—its Nazi past and its attempt after 1945 to avoid German-style *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* or longing to come to terms with the past by claiming to have been "Hitler's first victim." Kurt Waldheim's election as federal president in 1986 came to symbolize an Austrian collective amnesia. Jörg Haider, who took over the FP leadership in the same year, stands for a different attitude of resentful remembrance. He has praised Hitler's employment policies and defended the "honor of the war-time generation" at a meeting of Waffen SS veterans. True, the protests from abroad and his bid for power led him to formally apologize—not for what he had said, but only for remarks "attributed to him." True also, he has withdrawn his denunciation of the Austrian nation as an "ideological miscarriage" and poses now as an Austrian rather than a German nationalist. Yet with all

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his remarkable turnabouts he has remained consistent in one respect. His election campaigns have always played on racist sentiments against the roughly 15 percent of the population who are immigrants. In the October elections FP posters called for an end to *Überfremdung* or "foreign infiltration," a term from the vocabulary of the Third Reich.

THE SECOND reaction is sheer amazement. Foreign journalists and others who have closely followed Austria's development in recent years rub their eyes. They do not believe that Haider's success is due to the dark side of the Austrian soul. After all, Social Democrats and Conservatives have learned the lesson of the Waldheim years and publicly accepted Austria's responsibility for its large share in Nazi atrocities. Haider's electoral support articulates a diffuse protest vote rather than endorsement for right-wing extremism. But why on earth do these people protest? One common answer is that they are the "losers of modernization." Yet over the whole period of Haider's rise, Austria has had one of the lowest unemployment rates in Western Europe. Export industries and tourism are booming, and last year inflation fell to a record low of 0.6 percent. Austria's economy has clearly profited from the country's membership in the European Union; the comparatively generous system of welfare benefits and retirement pensions has not suffered severe cutbacks. Crime rates are down and still falling. There are virtually no strikes or other serious social unrest. There have indeed been periodically exploding budget deficits, and the Maastricht criteria for monetary stability have forced the government to cut back on public spending; more important, there is growing social inequality and an expanding sector of precarious jobs. But all this is still a far cry from what neoliberalism has brought to other European countries. Nor are Haider's voters exactly the underdogs of society. He has made great inroads among young blue-collar workers, a group where the FP has now more support than the Social Democrats, but his party also attracts yuppies and successful entrepreneurs.

The other big surprise for observers throughout Europe was how the ruling coalition reacted to the election results. Why would a well-established government in an extremely stable country commit political suicide? Conservatives and Social Democrats had again achieved a quite comfortable majority of 64 percent of the seats in Parliament. Until January, opinion polls consistently showed that a continuation of the old two-party government was by far the most popular option. Yet both parties interpreted the election as a defeat for their long-term strategy of excluding the FP from government. The SP fought hard to stay in power and keep the FP out, but it was unwilling to bring forward a new leadership that could have lent credibility to the promise of a different political style. Its protracted and ultimately unsuccessful negotiations with its long-time partners strengthened the sense that it was time for a radical change. The Social Democrats' dilemma was that both options open to them—a continuation of the coalition or a minority government— required Conservative cooperation. The VP had mobilized its voters by announcing that they would go into opposition if they were overtaken by the FP, but when that happened, their chairman Wolfgang Schüssel opted instead for the chancellery in a coalition with the FP. Haider was willing to stay out of the government if he could get his party in. All Schüssel had to do was to eliminate the SP's options while appearing to negotiate in good faith. He was eventually sworn in as Austria's new chancellor, at the mercy of Haider—a personal success that may lead his party into the abyss.

THE THIRD reaction was that of Austrian democratic leftists and liberals. They were not at all surprised, had seen what was coming for a long time, and, strangely enough, seemed almost relieved when it happened. In their analysis, Haider was brought to power by the same political system that had sought to exclude him. Political scientists have analyzed Austria as a model of neocorporatism and consociational democracy. The country had been governed by a grand coalition of VP and SP from 1945 to 1966 and then again from 1986 to 2000. Social Democrats have been out of government for only four years, from 1966 to 1970, and ruled alone thereaf-

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ter until 1986. Even during the years of single-party government, a cross-party consensus on major economic and social policy issues was achieved through integrating the unions and employers' federations into the policy-making process at the highest levels. This regime of "social partnership" secured extraordinary social and political stability and has remained largely intact even in recent years. What has, however, changed is its capacity to integrate the rank and file. Austrian neocorporatism was not merely a system of organizing elite consensus, but also of patronage. The spoils of economic growth—jobs, public housing, social services—were distributed through party organizations and economic interest groups. Since the mid eighties, the end of "Austrokeynesian" economics, the privatization of a large state-owned industrial sector, and the general decline of party organizations and voter loyalty have shattered the social bases of the old regime. Having never been part of the system, the FP was in an ideal position to pick up the pieces. Its historic origins lie in the "third camp" of German nationalism that had competed with Socialists and Christian Conservatives since the later years of the Hapsburg monarchy. After 1945, the remnants of this movement, for obvious reasons, were shut out of the effort to build a new Austrian nation. It was the social democrat Bruno Kreisky who prevented the FP's disappearance from the political scene. His strategy in 1970 was to secure long-term hegemony for the SP by strengthening the FP and thus splitting the "bourgeois camp." It is a bitter irony that Kreisky's stunning success in breaking Conservative dominance in Austrian politics has now ousted his own party from power.

Haider is the pied piper of Austrian politics. He lures the children of social partnership away from their traditional parties by playing variations on their own familiar melodies. One melody is about politics for the "little man." Generations of voters have been educated to believe that politics is not their business and that social progress can be had only by avoiding conflict. Paradoxically, Haider continues this tradition of delegated activism, but his claim is to fight for the man in the street against those in power who have abandoned him. Another melody is about Austria's place in the world. Kreisky's foreign policy fostered illusions of grandeur. Small and neutral Austria proudly saw itself as a respected player in world politics. The end of the cold war and Austria's integration into the EU have shattered the myth of an Austrian *Sonderweg* or "separate path." Haider skillfully appeals to the resulting sentiments of narcissistic insult by interpreting any critique of his own politics as an attack by the outside world against Austria. A third melody is about immigrants coming to work in Austria. It was the ruling coalition parties who kept insisting, contrary to all evidence, that Austria was not a country of immigration. In recent years, these same parties have radically cut back family reunification. Haider's xenophobic propaganda appeared to push the government parties, but in fact he was often trailing behind their actual immigration policies.

THREE DIFFERENT arguments have been suggested as to why the FP in power might be the lesser evil. The first holds that running the country might eventually turn the party into a respectable democratic force. Now that Austria is part of the European Union any government has a limited scope for action and is under constant observation. So Haider, it is said, will be tamed once he is in power. This argument is the Conservatives' excuse, and it is a weak one. One does not turn a crook into an acceptable partner simply by accepting him as a partner. Even if Haider tones down his radical rhetoric for a while, it is not his future behavior, but his past policies that have brought his party into government. The radical right everywhere will correctly understand this as a historic precedent.

A second argument, the opposite of the first, counts on Haider's incorrigibility. He is an opposition politician by nature who will never miss an opportunity to attack. It was the political stalemate of the old coalition regime that provided him with an opposition bonus. Bringing his party into government is the only way of breaking the spell. Excluding him from power made him strong; sharing power with him should weaken him. This is, however, a

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non sequitur, and there is also empirical evidence against the argument. Haider has already served as governor of Carinthia (a federal province) twice, and this has certainly not diminished his political standing. The argument that once in power he would not be able to hold on for long requires a severe underestimation both of Haider's political intelligence and of the tectonic shifts in Austrian society that have brought him to the top.

The third reason is more plausible. The old coalition was held together only by an agreement to keep Haider out. As a result, there was no real choice between different government options. The FP-VP coalition finally draws a clear line between opposed ideological positions. The alternative to this government is a coalition of the SP with a Green Party that has been gaining strength since October. In the next election there will be a polarization between these two blocs and, as a result, both the SP and VP will regain their lost identities. This is good for democracy, and it will offer new opportunities for the left.

I wish I could share this optimism. Unfortunately, there are quite different tales to be told from the experience of Britain and Germany. In Britain, it took Labour a long time to come out of the tunnel, and when it finally emerged it had turned into a different sort of party. The conservative interregnum in Germany was not much shorter, though less harsh, and the subsequent, thoroughly disappointing, performance of the red-green coalition does not make this an attractive option for neighboring Austria. But what about France? Well, one lesson to be learned from France is that it is possible to have cohabitation and still push back a racist party by firmly pledging its permanent exclusion from power. And even if opposition were the Austrian SP's best chance to stop its further ideological as well as electoral decline, I would still contend that what's good for Social Democrats is not necessarily good for the country.

I CAN SEE only two long-term strategies that could stop Haider's ascent to full power. One is to persistently ostracize him and his party within the EU. The other is to build networks of resistance in civil society. The two will work only when they are combined. Pressure only from abroad can still make Haider a popular hero domestically. An anti-FP movement within Austria would have to reach beyond the left and avoid being choked by a Social Democratic embrace. Its task is not to restore a past elite consensus but to rebuild popular political arenas and a culture of public conflict. Haider's brand of national populism has two weaknesses. It lacks any consistent ideology and it mobilizes resentment but does not organize interests. Haider has seized the void created by the degeneration of social partnership. In order to re-establish a genuinely political space, the democratic left will have to articulate its (different) ideologies and give a voice to those interests that have been silenced and are now under attack. ●

RAINER BAUBÖCK is a political scientist at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Research Unit for Institutional Change and European Integration.

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Teaching in a Multicultural Context

Lessons from Singapore

Daniel A. Bell

TWO PEDAGOGICAL principles seem to pull in opposite directions. On the one hand, proponents of Great Works argue that university students in the social sciences and humanities should be exposed largely, if not exclusively, to the contributions of profound and influential thinkers. On the other hand, proponents of multiculturalism argue that students should study the diverse contributions of the various ethnic groups composing present-day plural societies.

My own teaching experience in Singapore led me to the perhaps surprising conclusion that these two *desiderata* do not necessarily conflict in practice. One can be a proponent of Great Works and a multiculturalist—even a radical multiculturalist, to the point that the curriculum is determined by the scholarly traditions of all ethnic groups in the classroom. No doubt the particularities of the Singaporean context led me to this conclusion, but I will try to argue that there may be implications for other plural societies as well.

Singapore's Political History

First, however, it is worth saying something about the political context. Singapore is a small tropical island roughly the size of Brooklyn; its current population is nearly four million. In the early nineteenth century, Singapore was colonized by the British, who tried to turn the island into an important trading center. This effort was partly successful, and the territory attracted migrants from China, India, and the surrounding Malay-Islamic archipelago. The British granted internal self-government to Singapore in 1959. But the ruling People's Action Party (PAP), led by Lee Kuan Yew, had doubts about the economic viability of a small independent island without any natural resources, and fought hard to join a federation with the surrounding territories. In 1963, Singapore, Malaya, Sarawak, and North Borneo formed a new federation—Malaysia. After two years, however, Singapore was expelled from Malaysia and forced to be independent. The expulsion was partly due to ethnic differences—mutual mistrust between the predominantly Chinese Singaporeans and their predominantly Muslim Malay neighbors. Disputes over economic policy and personality clashes between the leaders of Singapore and Malaya also played a role.

Lee Kuan Yew famously wept in public when he announced the separation. Singapore did not have any difficulty in winning international acceptance of its independence, but the economic and security challenges lying ahead seemed insurmountable. To deal with the former, the PAP—although nominally socialist—adopted the strategy of opening its country to foreign investment. As Lee explained in his recent memoirs, "Of course, the prevailing theory was that multinationals were exploiters of cheap labor and cheap raw materials and would suck [us] dry. We had no raw materials for them to exploit. All we had was labor. Nobody else wanted to exploit labor. So why not, if they want to exploit our labor? They're welcome to it. And we found out that whether or

An earlier version of this paper was presented at a conference, "Moral Philosophy in Education: The Challenge of Human Difference," in Jerusalem. It was the first conference co-hosted by an Israeli and a Palestinian institute—the Jerusalem Spinoza Institute and Al-Quds University, under the auspices of UNESCO.

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not they exploited us, we were learning how to do a job from them, which we would never have learnt." This innovative strategy has underpinned Singapore's rapid economic development since the 1960s. Even "communist" countries like China now follow the Singaporean model of reliance on multinational corporations to import capital, provide employment, and build up management skills.

Singapore did have a model—Israel—in meeting its security challenges. As a small country surrounded by large, potentially hostile, and predominantly Muslim neighbors, Singapore looked to Israel for guidance. As Lee put it, "We intend to fight for our stake in this part of the world, and [to] anybody who thinks they can push us around, I say: over my dead body. . . . We opted for the Israeli fashion, for in our situation we think it might be necessary not only to train every boy but also every girl to be a disciplined and effective digit in defense of their country." Lee's government invited a group of Israeli military advisers to provide covert training of Singapore's defense force, and in 1967 Singapore introduced an Israeli-style policy of compulsory military national service (but only for adult males). The PAP also launched a massive nation-building exercise designed to forge a common identity—one that would motivate soldiers to face danger on the nation's behalf.

NATION-BUILDING was perhaps Singapore's greatest challenge. As Lee put it, "[We had] to build a nation from scratch." This was not made easy by the fact that Singapore was, and is, an ethnically plural society—77 percent Chinese, 14 percent Malay, and 7 percent Indian—and the various groups were literally at war with each other in the early sixties. The Malay minority in particular posed a challenge to the creation of national unity in Singapore, because its members were more inclined to side with Malays in the surrounding states than with the majority Chinese. Thus, the PAP felt it could not create a new identity by appealing to Chinese culture. Instead, it attempted to combat all forms of ethnic parochialism by fostering the growth of a new Singaporean identity that would underpin security and prosperity. For example, the government broke up ethnic enclaves by moving people into ethnically mixed public housing blocs. It also promoted the use of English, which involved overriding the wishes of all groups, including the majority Chinese. Lee is quite explicit that Singapore's nation-building exercise was incompatible with democracy:

> Supposing we had chosen Chinese or tried to sponsor Chinese, how would we make a living? How would we fit ourselves into the region and into the world? We could not have made a living. But the Chinese then would have wanted it. And if we had taken a vote, we would have had to follow that policy. So when people say, 'Oh, ask the people!', it's childish rubbish. We are leaders. We know the consequences. . . . They say people can think for themselves? Do you honestly believe that the chap who can't pass primary six knows the consequences of his choice when he answers a question viscerally, on language, culture and religion? But we knew the consequences. We would starve, we would have race riots. We would disintegrate.

Ethnic attachments, however, proved to be more resilient than expected. Lee now recognizes the excessive *chutzpah* of his early days: "It was as well that we did not realize how daunting were the problems of building a nation out of peoples of totally different races, languages, religions and cultures. I would be appalled if I [were] asked to start off all over again . . . with the heavy knowledge of the almost irreconcilable divisions which were to open up." The PAP eventually gave up on the aim of replacing ethnic identity with a new Singaporean identity. Instead, it now seeks to accommodate the fact of ethnic pluralism in various ways, such as guaranteeing a seat for minority candidates in multi-seat constituencies and promoting ethnic-based welfare services. The primary language of education is still English, but the various groups also receive education in their "mother tongues"—Mandarin for the Chinese, Malay for the Malay Muslims, and Tamil for the Indians. In the late 1980s, the government also promoted religious education in secondary schools, with the different religions corresponding roughly to the different ethnic groups.

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Racism in the Classroom?

In 1991, I was offered a job teaching political theory at the National University of Singapore. Although the lectures were to be given in English, it was obvious that university authorities—following the general political trend in Singapore—were leaning toward a renewed emphasis on ethnic pride and heritage. I was not given any explicit guidance, but I took this to mean that I should give greater recognition to Asian "civilizations" in the course curriculum.

This was not difficult. I had replaced an expatriate who relied solely on Western sources to teach a large (more than three hundred students) first year "Introduction to Political Theory" course. He began the course with some arguments for *realpolitik*, drawing on Machiavelli's *Prince* to make his points. This seemed like a good starting point for the course. I would begin with the theme "Politics Without Morality," and then move on to various thinkers who argued for different combinations of morality and politics. Instead of Machiavelli, however, I would draw on the ancient Chinese thinker Han Fei Tzu (c. 280–233 BCE). Han Fei was a profoundly cynical—and very witty—proponent of *realpolitik*. He wrote a political handbook for power-hungry rulers, supporting his advice with colorful examples that occasionally went beyond the bounds of good taste:

> If the ruler reveals what he dislikes, his ministers will be careful to disguise their motives; if he shows what he likes, his ministers will feign abilities they do not have. . . . Because Duke Huan of Ch'I was jealous and loved his ladies in waiting, Shu-tiao [a minister] castrated himself in order to be put in charge of the harem; because the duke was fond of unusual food, Yi-ya steamed his son's head and offered it to the duke. Because Tzu-k'uai of Yen admired worthy men, Tzu-chih insisted that he would not accept the throne even if it were offered to him . . . . Hence, Tzu-chih, by playing the part of the worthy, was able to snatch power from his sovereign; Shu-tiao and Yi-ya, by catering to the ruler's desires, were able to invade his authority . . . . What caused this? It is an example of the calamity that comes when the ruler reveals his feelings to his ministers. As far as the feelings of the ministers go, they do not necessarily love their ruler; they serve him only in the hope of substantial gain. Now if the ruler of men does not hide his feelings and conceal his motives, but instead gives his ministers a foothold by which they may invade his rights, then they will have no difficulty in doing what [those ministers] did.

Han Fei had special contempt for Confucian political thinkers who stressed tolerance and moral education. He did not deny that a light hand in ruling had its place in a golden age of social harmony and material abundance. But in his own day—the Warring States period—such policies would lead to disaster, and Confucians were naively drawing inappropriate lessons from accidental features of past societies:

> [T]he sage does not try to practice the ways of antiquity or to abide by a fixed standard, but examines the affairs of the age and takes what precautions are necessary. There was a farmer of Sung who tilled the land, and in his field was a stump. One day a rabbit, racing across the field, bumped into the stump, broke its neck, and died. Thereupon the farmer laid aside his plow and took up watch beside the stump, hoping that he would get another rabbit in the same way. But he got no more rabbits, and instead became the laughing stock of Sung. Those who think they can take the ways of ancient kings and use them to govern the people of today all belong in the category of stump-watchers!

In his own period, Han Fei argued that state power needed to be strengthened by means of harsh laws and punishments. His aim was nothing less than total state control, and he stressed over and over again that moral considerations should not get in the way. Not surprisingly, rulers were receptive to this sort of advice, starting with the ruthless king of Qin, who ascended to the throne in 246 BCE and drew on Han Fei's advice to conquer and rule all of China as first emperor of the Qin dynasty. Following Han Fei's recommendation, the king of Qin also buried alive several hundred Confucian scholars with their books. This dynasty was short-lived, but Han Fei's influence persisted. It would only be a slight exaggeration to describe subsequent Chinese imperial his-

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tory as a constant struggle between Han Fei's *realpolitik* and Confucian morality.

So it seemed reasonable to begin my political theory course with a leading Chinese political thinker who was both more straightforwardly Machiavellian and more politically influential than Machiavelli himself. In the next part of the course, on "Morality Without Politics," I discussed the views of anarchist thinkers who argued against all forms of state coercion on the grounds that human beings were potentially rational and self-regulating. Mikhail Bakunin was an obvious choice, but I made an effort to discuss the views of Chinese Daoist thinkers as well. In the last part of the course, on "Morality and Politics," I discussed the views of political thinkers who argued that the state was necessary, but that its policies should be informed and constrained by moral ideals. I drew on Aristotle and Mill, but I also discussed the views of Confucius. I hoped that students would appreciate my attempts to incorporate more Asian viewpoints in the syllabus.

SHORTLY BEFORE my last lecture, a student slipped a letter signed X under my office door. It was not friendly. The student accused me of racism—more specifically, of glorifying Chinese thinkers and denigrating the cultural contributions of Singapore's minority groups. On the face of it, this was an absurd accusation—what could a newly arrived Canadian academic with no previous ties to the country gain from taking sides in local culture wars? X, who had a fertile imagination, suggested possible motives. Either I was trying to curry favor with my departmental head (a PAP parliamentarian of ethnic Chinese descent) or I was trying to help my Chinese wife climb within the PAP political establishment (my wife did work for a government think-tank, but she did not have any political aspirations). To support the claim of a pro-Chinese bias, X argued that all my accounts of Chinese thinkers were positive. Furthermore, I cast minority groups in a negative light—for example, I called Indians "barbarians." I was dumbfounded by the latter accusation, until I realized that X must have been referring to my lectures on John Stuart Mill. Like most nineteenth-century European liberals, Mill had nothing but contempt for non-Western civilizations. He justified "civilizing missions" to uplift what he called "barbarians" in India, apparently oblivious to the ugly reality of European imperialism (notwithstanding—or perhaps because of—the fact that he worked for the East India Company).

During my lectures on Mill, I had assumed that his views on imperialism were so obviously repugnant—especially in an Asian context—that there was no need to condemn them explicitly. I realized that I may have made one or two ironical references to "barbarians" and that the irony may not have been obvious to all students. I did, however, use quotes around the word "barbarians" in my lecture notes. Apparently all this was missed, and X believed that I was endorsing Mill's views.

Because I could not respond personally to X's letter, I brought it to class, read parts of it out loud, and clarified my motives to the whole class. I made a distinction between presenting and defending arguments. I stated my own (critical) views on Mill's defense of European imperialism. I further explained that I did not mean to endorse all the arguments of Chinese thinkers discussed in class—for example, I didn't agree with Han Fei's advice that Confucian scholars should be liquidated. I added that it was difficult to construe my presentation of Han Fei's ideas—for example, his claim that a minister would try to climb the political ladder by steaming his son's head for an emperor who was fond of unusual food—as an attempt to glorify Chinese political thinkers. I also responded to the speculations about my hidden political agenda.

By the time I had finished, many students were laughing, apparently amused by the absurdity of the accusations and my dry responses. Still, I noticed—for the first time—that several male students of Indian descent were grouped together at the back of the class. They were not laughing.

When I showed X's letter to a senior Singaporean colleague, he pointed out that I was partly to blame, because I had only discussed the contributions of Chinese thinkers. The point is not whether I actually endorsed their arguments; merely presenting them in class showed that I took them seriously. And

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by excluding the contributions of Muslim and Indian thinkers from the curriculum, I was implicitly sending the message that their views were unimportant and uninteresting—or at least, that is how it would be seen by Malay and Indian students.

Inclusive Multiculturalism

The lesson was clear—I needed to expand my curriculum to include the contributions of Muslim and Indian thinkers. The following year, I spent more time on the "Politics Without Morality" section of the course. I investigated the contributions of Indian and Muslim thinkers, and to my surprise learned that there were influential Machiavellian thinkers in the Indian and Islamic traditions as well, once again, long before Machiavelli's time.

Kautilya's *Arthasastra* (fourth century BCE) is arguably the most famous political treatise in ancient Indian philosophy. Kautilya, a minister of the first Mauryan empire, relied on the historical and comparative method to draw lessons for the establishment, operation, and expansion of the machinery of government. He favored a centralized administration with the king at the top of a hierarchy and an extensive use of spies to guarantee internal security. The section on foreign policy is particularly Machiavellian. The ruler should do his best to expand his territory, without moral or religious constraints. Quite the opposite—he should go out of his way to prey on people's superstitious beliefs to further his own ends. Consider the following list of tactics for assassinating an enemy ruler:

> [He may] be killed by mechanical contrivances of the kind described below, when, out of piety, he comes to worship on the occasion of a festival or a frequently visited temple:
> (i) by releasing a mechanism causing a wall or a stone to fall on him after he has entered the temple;
> (ii) by letting loose a shower of stones from an upper story;
> (iii) by dislodging a door on him;
> (iv) by dropping a beam fixed at one end on him;
> (v) by firing weapons concealed in the image of the deity at him;
> (vi) by poisoning the cowdung spread on the floor or the water used for sprinkling in the places where he stays, sits or moves about;
> (vii) by poisoning the flowers and incense offered to him;
> (viii) by making him inhale [inside the temple] poisonous fumes concealed by fragrances; or
> (ix) by causing him to fall in a spiked pit by the release of a trap door in the floor under his bed or seat.

To fulfill my Islamic "quota," I selected Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406). Like the other Machiavellians, Khaldun led an active political life in turbulent times. He withdrew from the "real world" in his forties, and settled down to write *The Muqaddimah*, or "Introduction to World History." This descriptive, sociological work—Khaldun is often referred to as the founder of modern sociology—covers a range of topics; volume one focuses on political themes. Khaldun drew on history and his own political experience to make his points. His approach contrasts with al-Farabi's description of the ideal Islamic city-state. Khaldun argued that the political thinker should describe what is, understand it, and draw lessons on the basis of history. According to Khaldun, *asabiyah* (group feeling), the tribal loyalty that makes the individual devote himself to the tribe, is the key to political power. The stronger the attachment to the group, the more the tribe is capable of conquering others:

> It should be known that since . . . desert life no doubt is the reason for bravery, savage groups are braver than others. They are, therefore, better able to achieve superiority and to take away the things that are in the hands of other nations.

Rulers should be well acquainted with *asabiyah* and rely on nomads to increase their power. Eventually, however, nomadic conquerors will succumb to the temptations of luxurious city life, and that is the beginning of the end. The once brave nomads become soft, flabby, and docile to outsiders, and the dynasty eventually falls to new tribes bound by strong *asabiyah*. This cyclical process, Khaldun argues, is socially necessary, and moral ideals are powerless to stop it.

So I included Kautilya and Khaldun in the course syllabus. I began with a Machiavellian checklist, suggesting that Machiavellian politi-

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cal thinkers have certain ideas about genre (practical handbooks for rulers), the ends of politics (maintenance and expansion of state power), the means of politics (expediency, not morality), human nature (prone to corruption and untrustworthy), and international relations (the pursuit of naked self-interest in an anarchical world). I then surveyed the four thinkers from the various traditions (including Machiavelli). I concluded that Han Fei Tzu was the most consistent Machiavellian—he scored a perfect five out of five on the checklist—and poor Machiavelli came in last place.

This time, I did not get any hate mail. In fact, I dare say that the course was successful, judging by the lively discussion in tutorial groups and the subsequent course evaluations. As far as I could tell, no one felt left out. Students seemed to be more motivated to learn about scholarly traditions that they took pride in—notwithstanding the fact that the political thinkers surveyed often held unsavory views. Moreover, several students told me that they enjoyed studying thinkers from other traditions, and that this actually contributed to inter-ethnic harmony.

The lesson I'd like to draw is obvious: a teacher should make an effort to design a curriculum that draws on the scholarly contributions of all ethnic groups in the class. More generally, multicultural education should draw on the traditions of all ethnic groups in society. From the pedagogical point of view, this has the advantage of enhancing positive feelings about the students' own ethnic groups, thus developing individual self-esteem among members of all groups and improving their academic performance. From the political point of view, an inclusive curriculum has the advantage of encouraging mutual learning and understanding. The paradoxical effect of drawing on the scholarly contributions of (all) ethnic groups is to break down the barriers between them and reinforce the desire to coexist peacefully in the same society.

Beyond Singapore?

Of course, one should be cautious about exporting this "lesson" to other teaching contexts. For one thing, it may only apply to introductory classes in the social sciences and the humanities (more advanced classes tend to be specialized, and cultural background does not matter as much in the natural sciences). Moreover, Singapore is perhaps a unique case, where there are three clearly defined ethnic groups, each of which takes pride in its own cultural heritage (and is encouraged to do so by the government). In other societies, it may not always be easy to draw a line between the different groups (even in Singapore, there are overlapping categories, such as Indian Muslims). Some classrooms may be so diverse that it isn't feasible to include the scholarly contributions of all ethnic groups. The inclusiveness principle may lead to petty disputes about how much time should be spent on each tradition (in my case, I gave equal time to each group, and the majority Chinese students did not complain). It is also conceivable that learning about another group's tradition will promote conflict rather than understanding.

Notwithstanding these caveats, I still believe that the principle of ethnic inclusiveness in the educational curriculum may be relevant for other multicultural contexts—and that this does not necessarily involve compromising on Great Works. Let me try to respond to (what I take to be) some important objections.

First, a critic may note that I was led to my happy conclusion by the fact that a certain kind of political toughmindedness can be found in many different cultures. Non-Western traditions, however, lack strong contributions on many other topics, and then it won't be possible to tailor the curriculum to mirror the ethnic composition of the classroom. For example, a teacher planning a high school civics course on democratic government or a university course on democratic theory could not avoid Eurocentrism. It remains a fact that the history of democracy and of democratic theory is largely, if not exclusively, a Western history.

But is it really a fact? In East Asia, for example, there are countless debates about the sources of democratic ideas within Confucianism, Islam, and so on. The practice of competitive elections for selecting rulers may have been invented in the West, but not all the values informing and justifying democratic elections (such as the idea that people should have a say in government) are distinctly European. Of course there are significant differences between

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the West and "the rest," but this too can be a topic of interest. Moreover, most non-Western societies have been in contact with Western liberal democratic ideas for over a century, and this has produced some fascinating debates over the pros and cons of Western-style democracy in this or that context. For example, Liang Qichao (1873-1929), arguably China's most influential twentieth-century intellectual, wrote at length about the implications of Western-style democracy in a Chinese context. There is no reason why such works cannot be part of the curriculum for a course on democratic theory—and perhaps they should, in a class that includes students of ethnic Chinese descent.

Needless to say, I do not mean to rule out the possibility that Great Works on particular topics may be lacking in some traditions. But it is difficult to know this in advance, prior to investigating the actual traditions. When I was made aware of the need to include the contributions of Muslim and Indian civilizations, I had no idea that great political thinkers in those traditions had developed arguments that could be compared in interesting ways to Machiavelli's ideas. Once I looked into it, I was pleasantly surprised.

ANOTHER OBJECTION is that some ethnic groups may not feel the kind of attachment to "their" tradition that would motivate further study. For example, second- or third-generation immigrants in the United States or Canada may not identify with the cultural background and scholarly achievements of their blood ancestors. In such a context, there would be no point in applying the principle of ethnic inclusiveness.

But is this an accurate diagnosis of the situation in North America? Some long-established, settled communities—Will Kymlicka calls them "national minorities"—do in fact identify with, and take pride in, the scholarly contributions of their ancestors. The *Québécois*, for example, might be more motivated to study the works of French thinkers. During my undergraduate days at Montreal's McGill University in the early 1980s, the political theory curriculum revolved almost entirely among anglophone and German thinkers (with the exception of a few lectures on Rousseau in the introduction to political theory course). In retrospect, one can wonder about the effect of this curriculum on the large number (over 30 percent) of francophone students at McGill. Perhaps some would have appreciated the opportunity to learn more about French writers (I must confess I did not notice this lacuna at the time, perhaps because I am "only" half francophone). Another potential benefit of exposure to French writers is that anglophone students could have developed a better understanding of French political culture—and, who knows, this may have led to a *rapprochement* of the "two solitudes."

This argument for multicultural education does not apply only to national minorities. Even second- or third-generation children of immigrants who willingly left their homelands sometimes identify with the contributions of their ancestors. Consider the large numbers of students of Chinese descent at the University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia. They often converse in Cantonese and Mandarin and retain a preference for Chinese food, and it is quite likely that they are interested in other parts of Chinese culture. Courses that include material from Chinese thinkers may well attract and interest such students—and sensitize other students to the value of Chinese civilization.

Opponents of multiculturalism may reply that there is a risk of unintentionally creating or reinforcing boundaries between students. Instead of "natural" assimilation into the majority culture, the children of immigrants will learn to identify with the culture of their ancestors, which can lead to conflicts with the majority culture that might otherwise be prevented. In North America, however, the forces of assimilation are so strong that learning about the contributions of immigrant cultures in a few high school and university courses will not prevent the ultimate "victory" of mainstream culture. The potential benefits of multicultural education—motivating minority and immigrant students and improving mutual understanding—far outweigh the risks. ●

DANIEL A. BELL teaches political philosophy at the University of Hong Kong. He is the author of *East Meets West: Human Rights and Democracy in East Asia*, forthcoming from Princeton University Press.

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Democratic Breakthrough in Croatia

Bogdan Denitch

DEMOCRACY HAS been given a second chance in Croatia with a dramatic breakthrough by democratic parties in parliamentary and presidential elections earlier this year. The national-chauvinist HDZ (Croatian Democratic Community) founded by Franjo Tudjman, which has ruled Croatia with an iron fist since 1991, lost control of Parliament. A coalition of six democratic parties, dominated by the alliance of social democrats and social liberals, now holds almost two-thirds of the seats. The new prime minister, Ivica Racan, heads the Social Democratic Party (SDP), which has evolved from the old Croatian League of Communists. The SPD is, if anything, excessively moderate, anxious to get Croatia into Europe.

Even more significantly, the most intransigent anti-HDZ candidate, Stipe Mesic, won the presidency as the candidate of the same coalition. Mesic sharply broke with Tudjman and HDZ in 1994 over their aggressive policy in Bosnia. Since then he has participated in sit-ins led by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) against evictions of Serbs from Zagreb and has gone to the Hague to testify about Croatian war crimes in Bosnia.

Mesic has been unequivocal in calling for the return of Serbian refugees, for cooperation with the Hague Court, for criminal prosecution of the new tycoons who have ransacked the Croatian economy, for a subordination of the secret services (there are four) to Parliament, and for a reduction of the vast prerogatives of the office of the president, which had reduced Croatia under Tudjman to a caricature of Latin American authoritarianism. Croatia has in effect elected a more political and powerful Havel.

The massive defeat of HDZ poses a problem to all those commentators who have argued that chauvinist ethnic-nationalism is the immutable master language of politics in the Balkans. If the HDZ in Croatia, with control of most mass media, with the army, police, and secret services, with funds legal and illegal, and the support of the local mafiosi and the "diaspora" Croats in Bosnia, can be defeated in a reasonably free election, how secure are the nationalist authoritarians in Bosnia and Serbia?

Victory in Croatia went to a coalition of clearly secular parties, committed to parliamentary democracy and an open society. What happens next will have a major impact on the region as a whole.

The new foreign minister, Toni Picula, visited Sarajevo right after the election to assure the Bosnians that the new Croat government will treat Bosnia as a friendly and sovereign state. The Hercegovinian Croats who have been receiving a U.S. $300 million a year subsidy, of which only a third shows in the budget, have been told that those days are over; they must look to Sarajevo and not Zagreb. (Under Tudjman, Zagreb promoted and appointed Croatian military commanders in Bosnia and supplemented their salaries.)

The Serbian "entity's" main town of Banja Luka has traditionally oriented itself to Zagreb and the Croatian port of Rijeka. That relationship is now likely to be restored, weakening Belgrade's influence—this is especially likely if the promises about easier return of Serbian refugees are carried out. Mesic has visited Montenegro and established cordial relations with the anti-Milosevic leadership. There is every indication that the borders between Montenegro and Croatia, currently quite soft, will be open by this summer. Tourist buses from Dubrovnik already make the trip. This not only strengthens Montenegro by reducing its isolation but creates an "informal" channel for communications between Yugoslavian and Croatian NGOs, independent journalists, oppositionists,

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Chechnya

As this issue of *Dissent* goes to press, the devastated city of Grozny is in Russian hands, and most of Chechnya is too, though the Russian hold is nowhere secure. "Scorched earth" is usually the policy of a retreating army; here, from the beginning, it has been the policy of the advancing army. Russian hands are bloody, and the bloodletting is not yet done. The lawlessness of Chechnya after the first Russian war and the terrorist campaign conducted by Chechen ultranationalists might have justified limited military action in Chechnya, but nothing can justify the brutality with which this war has been fought. Claiming to fight terrorists, Russia has treated the entire Chechen nation as an enemy and guaranteed its enmity for generations to come. The pictures of Grozny after the Russian triumph are an indictment of the "triumphant" army and of the government that claims to direct it.

And yet...none of us who supported NATO's military intervention in Kosovo called for anything remotely similar in Chechnya. Interventionists elsewhere, we have called only for condemnation here and, some of us, for economic sanctions. Of course, Russian brutality does not extend to genocide or ethnic cleansing; Moscow means to rule the Chechens, not to get rid of them. So perhaps tough sanctions would have been the right response. In fact, however, no serious price at all has been exacted for this awful war—except the price exacted by the Chechens themselves. The rest of us have managed to do nothing. Big bullies act where and when they want; little bullies (sometimes) are forced to back down. This recognition of "the way of the world" is not an argument against stopping the little bullies. But we should also, at least, record the crimes of the big ones.

—Michael Walzer

and intellectuals. These groups have been isolated by the anti-Milosevic sanctions, which hit the enemies of the Milosevic regime harder than the regime itself.

If democratic Croatia is successful, it will raise hope for the demoralized opposition to Milosevic in Serbia and for the endangered Montenegrin experiment in multi-ethnic democracy. But the Croat opening toward democracy will fail unless the West provides massive aid to an economy that has been systematically devastated and looted for a decade. Although the looting was locally organized, the devastation is the result of policies pushed by the United States and Western Europe and their instruments, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund: privatize and marketize immediately, and cut back on social spending and "excessive" wages and pensions. In the Croat case, the effects of these policies were exacerbated by the Pentagon's passion for exporting expensive military hardware. Five years after the end of the Yugoslav wars of succession, enormous chunks of the budget are devoted to the military.

Any fear that we would respond quickly with substantial aid, which is essential, were dispelled by Madeline Albright's almost insulting "present" of U.S. $8 million upon her visit to Zagreb right after the elections. Imaginative and dramatic this was not. It is useless to hope that the United States and Western Europe might come up with the money that one month's bombing of Yugoslavia and Kosovo cost. I would be delighted if one week's cost were provided. Instead, we will almost certainly encourage the Croat government to undertake a grim policy of fiscal austerity and debt payment, to show that it is "responsible."

The message will be that a move toward democratic decency in Croatia is necessarily accompanied by a drop in an already dangerously low living standard. A center-left government must betray its own base in order to be "responsible" in the eyes of the West and its financial institutions. Given the pent-up demands of the unemployed, most of whom are young and educated, and of war veterans and union members, many of whom are owed months of pay or have been working without pay merely

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to keep social insurance, the new government will face mass demonstrations and wide discontent before the year is up. Happily, it will be far less ready to use the police and the military to confront strikers and demonstrators than the Tudjman government was. But something will have to give. Austerity and neoliberal economics are a formula for the failure of democracy in Croatia. It would mean the end of hope for a way out of the economic and social blind alley into which Croatia has been led during ten years of right-wing rule.

But doesn't the Pact on Stability negotiated in Sarajevo in 1999 provide billions of dollars of aid by the European Community (EC) for the Balkans? Given the grotesque bureaucracy and slow pace with which the EC moves, that is a very thin hope. Note that half a year after undertaking responsibility for Kosovo, the "international community" has failed to provide even the funds for six thousand police, the minimum needed; it has failed to fund courts, judges, and jails, let alone any substantial reconstruction. Kosovo is a frightening precedent. It hardly seems possible that the United States or the EC will seize the moment for democracy and stability in the Balkans. ●

BOGDAN DENITCH, an honorary chair of Democratic Socialists of America, heads the Institute for Transitions to Democracy, an NGO active in Croatia, Bosnia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Letter from Cuba

Anya Schiffrin

AFTER WORKING as a journalist in Vietnam for two years, the author made her first trip to Cuba in January 2000. She described her impressions to colleagues and friends in the following letter.—EDS.

Dear____,

Of course I had heard how repressive Fidel Castro's regime is, and we all know how badly central planning works. Yet I was amazed at how poorly things seem to be going in Cuba and how unreconstructed the country still is. In terms of economic reform it lags fifteen years behind China and probably five years behind Vietnam. For example, agricultural reform seems to have begun in Cuba only after the collapse of the former Soviet Union, and the country set up a central bank just a few years ago; Vietnam launched its version of perestroika, *Doi Moi*, in the mid-1980s and set up the State Bank of Vietnam in the early 1990s.

The closed nature of the economy is evident in the lack of business activity on the streets; it is very rare to find anyone even selling food from carts. I think Cuba is the first developing country I have ever been to where no one sells juice or fruit from a stand—let alone a substantial meal such as *pho*, the delicious noodle soup with chicken or beef sold all over Vietnam. Local taxis drivers commented that it was illegal for them to carry us (I was traveling with Sheri Prasso, an American journalist who's lived in Cambodia) because Cubans need a license to do private business with tourists. The drivers were afraid of getting caught and having to pay a fine. Licensing charges in the tourist industry are very high; to drive a taxi or rent rooms to foreigners, you must pay U.S. $200 to $250 a month in taxes–even if you don't have any business that month. Many people are afraid to risk setting up businesses and, as you can imagine, they are furious about the limitation.

Technically, Cuba has no shortages. There's lots of stuff to buy but only in the dollar shops or on the black market where fuel is available. Many Cubans seem to live off remittances from relatives in the United States. (we were told that U.S. $50 a month was adequate) or from dollars they get working in the tourist business. People who can't get dollars are pretty much screwed because the government-provided rations are tiny. We went to a state-run bakery and looked at some customers' ration books while they were waiting for bread. People are allocated

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a small amount of bread every day; some rice, eggs, and meat each month; children get milk until the age of seven. Yet it was clear from the books that some goods, such as tomato paste, are simply not available in the ration system and have not been for months. The state employees at the bakery had set up a private business and were selling cut flowers outside, presumably to supplement their salaries.

I went to some of the downtown department stores in Havana, and there was little to buy: some old-fashioned toys and ugly clothes in cheap fabrics. It was far worse than in Russia in the 1980s. But one Cuban friend told me (with a tinge of hurt pride) that there is far more available now than a few years ago. At the lunch counter, people were eating awful sandwiches made of rolls and mystery meat. According to the guidebooks and even Martha Gellhorn's memoirs, Cuban food has always been bad. So it's probably not fair to blame the communists.

The newspapers were another shock. The government-run *Juventud Rebelde* and *Granma* made me long for the Vietnamese Communist Party's *Nhan Dan* or even the *People's Daily* in China. The Cuban papers are propaganda rags with absolutely no real news. Every day we were on the island, there was a front page story about six-year-old refugee Elian Gonzalez and a heavy-handed story inside about how high infant mortality rates are in the United States. There were a few news briefs from Reuters or the Spanish news agency EFE on the inside pages, but the longer foreign news stories were about how great other "socialist" countries are. They were written in a rhetorical style that you rarely find anymore. Foreign soldiers were "mercenaries," and Miami's Cuban-American congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen was a "ferocious wolf disguised as a woman."

It took the official papers several days to report on the light aircraft that buzzed Havana on January 1 and dropped propaganda leaflets calling for a general strike. But the press had a field day when it turned out the plane was piloted by Vietnamese-born Ly Tong, who had fought against the communists during the Vietnam War and in 1992 had hijacked a Vietnam Airlines plane en route from Bangkok to Ho Chi Minh City. "A Lunatic, on Drugs, or a Mercenary?" screamed the headline in the English-language *Granma International* on January 9. The papers made a huge point about the pilot's "mercenary" origins. Someone told us the Cuban media mentioned the incident only after it was apparent that people all over the island were talking about it. We overheard locals discussing the reports, and a number of people brought it up in conversation with us.

We rented a car, drove around for five days, and picked up hitchhikers everywhere. Because of the fuel shortages, the entire nation hitchhikes. We always had three or four people in the back seat, and everyone we met asked us about Elian Gonzalez. They all said he should be allowed to return home to his father. They also said the conflict was not the fault of the U.S. government but of the extremists in Miami—true from my point of view. It was also the Party line. Like the Vietnamese, the Cubans seem to believe what they read in the newspapers. For example, people think that New York is very dangerous and Mexico is very poor (although, with per capita gross domestic product at $4,200 a year, Mexico is doing well compared to China and Vietnam, let alone Cuba). Yet people I spoke with resented the government-organized mass demonstrations for Elian, which they said were a waste of gasoline. The authorities also canceled regular television programming so everyone could watch Elian propaganda. That really ticked people off.

As in Vietnam, it was quite easy to see where the Party draws the line on political debate. In Vietnam, people complain about corruption all the time but not about other problems. In Cuba, people griped about the economy constantly but were generally afraid to talk about human rights, freedom of the press, and so on. The Ministry of the Interior does have plainclothes agents all over, and there is a strong neighborhood watch system that monitors (and so stifles) potential dissent.

Far worse in Cuba than in Vietnam is the strict double standard applied to nationals and foreigners. Cubans are banned from patronizing resorts or hotels and from buying certain theater tickets if they can be sold to foreigners—apparently because the government desperately needs foreign exchange. A foreign journalist told us that his Latin American wife was banned

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from press conferences and held by Interior Ministry officials until they determined she was not Cuban. On one occasion, a government official rubbed his skin to show her that brown people were not allowed into the hotel she was trying to enter.

In general, Cubans defend their health and education system, saying they love the free social services. Yet these are very underfunded. There are fancy clinics for foreigners who fly in for special treatments, but herbal medicines are the norm for locals. One doctor told us there is a shortage of all medications except aspirin, and in the clinic that he showed us, there was nothing but some herbs. We visited a school in the northern town of Remedios where no one had pens, and the pencils were all stubs without erasers. The classrooms had peeling paint, and there were few books. I traveled to Cuba with a suitcase full of pens, markers, soap, shampoo, and chocolates, which were eagerly received. Even the museum guards asked us for chocolates. In one town, they swapped beautiful peso notes decorated with Che Guevara's picture for a bottle of shampoo.

People in the countryside seem more supportive of the system, in part because conditions have improved more markedly there than in the cities, in part because older people there remember the bad old days. City dwellers seem more fed up. No one anywhere appears to like Raul Castro, Fidel's brother and designated successor. One of the few things that seems better in Cuba than in Vietnam is the lack of corruption. The police don't take bribes, and a Canadian businessman told us that commercial bribes never amount to more than 1 percent of the contract price. He said the bribes are included in the price, not paid separately. A few high-level officials have been implicated in drug crimes, but this was exceptional. No doubt as the country becomes more capitalist, corruption will become more common as it has in Vietnam and China.

The trip was not all sober observation. We got lots of sun and heard enough salsa to last a lifetime. After four rum *mojitos*, I accidentally picked up a prostitute at 3:00 a.m. in a salsa bar. Sheri and I began questioning her about her line of work in an informal interview, but then it became clear she thought we were negotiating a price for a threesome. When she realized we were interested only in talking, she stomped back to the dance floor in a huff. Those of you who frequent the bars in Ho Chi Minh City might be shocked to hear that she quoted us a price of $100–a lot more expensive than the $7.00 now charged for straight sex in Ho Chi Minh City. (I hear prices there have collapsed because foreign investment has fallen off, and some Vietnamese prostitutes are offering sex for free in the hopes of finding a foreign boyfriend).

We also consulted a Santeria fortune-teller (Santeria beliefs are based on a mixture of Catholicism and animistic African religions.) He performed a purification ceremony for Sheri involving rings of fire, a dove, broken eggs, and machetes rubbed across her stomach. After that, we bought the beads of our appropriate Yoruba deities. Wearing them on the street, we felt the locals treated us with new-found respect.

We had a wonderful trip, and I would gladly go back. But it seems to me the Cubans are missing their opportunity to reform from within. As a result, it will take the International Monetary Fund about five minutes to dismantle the revolution once Castro dies. Although economic growth was expected to be 5 percent to 6 percent in 1999 (thanks in part to a rise in sugar production) and although people claim things are better than during the "special period" (when the former Soviet Union cut off aid), the current system is unsustainable. By not setting the pace of reform, the Cuban Communist Party is denying itself any say in how things will be run in the future. After Castro, the folks from Miami will come back, and so will U.S. companies. The revolution will be a thing of the past. The Vietnamese, on the other hand, are masters at keeping the International Monetary Fund at bay and taking World Bank money while making only minor economic reforms. Given the very close relations between the two countries, I am surprised the Cubans have not decided to follow the Vietnamese example.

That's all for now. Please keep in touch—or better yet, come visit.

Much love, *Anya* ●

ANYA SCHIFFRIN is currently on the Knight-Bagehot Fellowship at Columbia University's School of Journalism.

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The Bridge at No Gun Ri

Parts of the Associated Press report reprinted here appeared in many American newspapers last fall, but we didn't see the entire report anywhere. It is a powerful document, an unusual piece of investigative journalism, and one that has had significant political consequences. The U.S. Army is now investigating the allegations made by the soldiers quoted here (after long resistance to similar allegations by Korean civilians). There should be an official report in late spring or early summer of this year. Anticipating the discussion certain to follow upon the report, we include with the AP dispatch two comments on the political and moral meaning of the incident at No Gun Ri. —Eds.

Sang-Hun Choe, Charles J. Hanley, and Martha Mendoza

From freshly dug foxholes, the GIs looked out over their gunsights. Hundreds of civilians, many of them women and children, were moving toward their lines, trying to cross to safety. The young American soldiers, new at the warfront, were wary. Orders had come down: No one crosses the line. "It was assumed there were enemy in these people," veteran Herman Patterson remembers.

A terrible episode was about to unfold in a "forgotten war," a chapter of the 1950-1953 Korean conflict that would remain unwritten until a dozen ex-soldiers, in interviews with the Associated Press, corroborated the allegations of South Koreans who say they survived a mass killing at the U.S. Army's hands. In late July 1950, the American veterans said, their army battalion killed a large number of South Korean refugees beneath a railroad bridge at a hamlet called No Gun Ri. Ex-GIs speak of a hundred, two hundred, or simply hundreds dead. The Koreans, whose claim or compensation was rejected last year, say three hundred were shot to death after a hundred had been killed in an air attack. American commanders had ordered units in retreat in the Korean War's first desperate weeks to shoot civilians as a defense against disguised enemy soldiers, according to once-classified documents found by the AP in months of researching U.S. military archives and interviewing veterans across the Unites States. Six veterans of the First Cavalry Division said they fired on the refugee throng at No Gun Ri, and six others said they witnessed the mass killing at the South Korean hamlet. More said they knew or heard about it. After five decades, none gave a complete, detailed account. But ex-GIs agreed on such elements as time and place, and on the preponderance of women, children, and old men among the victims.

The veterans also disagreed: some said they were fired upon from beneath the bridge, but others said they don't remember hostile fire. One said they later found a few disguised North Korean soldiers among the dead. But ex-comrades disputed this. Several said some soldiers refused to shoot what one described as "civilians just trying to hide."

The thirty Korean claimants—survivors and victims' relatives—said it was an unprovoked, three-day carnage. "The American soldiers played with our lives like boys playing with flies," said Chun Choon-ja, a twelve-year-old girl at the time. Armed with new evidence that U.S. GIs had confirmed much of their account, the Korean claimants called for a U.S. investigation into the killings. "We hope the U.S. government will meet our demands and console the wandering souls of those who died an unfair death," the claimants said in a statement.

The U.S. military has said repeatedly it found no basis for the allegations. After the AP report was released, Pentagon spokesman P.J. Crowly said, "We just have no information in historical files to lend any clarity to what might have happened in July 1950." AP research also found no official army account of the events. In the end, the Koreans have said in a series of

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petitions, some three hundred refugees lay dead under the bridge's twin arches. About a hundred others were killed in a preceding attack by the U.S. Air Force planes, they say. That would make No Gun Ri one of only two known cases of large-scale killings of noncombatants by U.S. ground troops in this century's major wars, military experts note. The other was Vietnam's My Lai massacre, in 1968, in which more than five hundred Vietnamese may have died.

FROM THE START of the 1950-1953 conflict, North Korean atrocities were widely reported. But the story of No Gun Ri has remained undisclosed for a half-century, despite sketchy news reports in 1950 implying that U.S. troops may have fired on refugees. No Gun Ri's dead were not alone. Veterans told the AP of two smaller but similar refugee killings in July and August 1950. They also told of refusing orders to fire on civilians in other cases. Hundreds more South Koreans were killed on August 3, 1950, when retreating U.S. commanders blew up two bridges as refugees streamed across, according to ex-GIs, Korean eyewitnesses, and declassified documents. The Americans wanted to deny the crossings to the enemy, reported massing more than fifteen miles away. But the general overseeing one bridge-blowing, the First Cavalry Division commander, had sought to stop the refugee flow as well. He told a correspondent he was sure most refugees were North Korean guerillas. For decades in the U.S.-allied South Korea, the No Gun Ri claimants were discouraged from speaking out. After they filed for compensation in 1997, their claim was rejected by the South Korean government on a technicality. Some elements of the No Gun Ri episode are unclear: What chain of officers gave the open-fire orders? Did GIs see gunfire from the refugees or their own ricochets? How many soldiers refused to fire? How high in the ranks did knowledge of the events extend?

The Korean conflict, which ended in stalemate, began on June 25, 1950, when the communist North invaded and sent the South Korean army and a small U.S. force reeling southward toward the peninsula's tip. American units rushed from Japan to stop the North Koreans were poorly equipped and ill-trained. The First Cavalry Division went in with little understanding of Korea. Half its sergeants had been transferred to other divisions. Teen-aged riflemen and young officers with no combat experience were thrust overnight into a hellish war, told to expect guerilla fighting and be wary of the tens of thousands of South Korean civilians pouring south with retreating Americans. The untested Seventh Cavalry Regiment, part of the First Cavalry Division, reached the front July 24. Within a day, many of its Second Battalion infantrymen were scattering in panic, tossing away weapons, at word of an enemy breakthrough nearby.

Records show that on the third day, July 26, the battalion's 660 men were regrouped and dug in at No Gun Ri, a hundred miles southeast of Seoul, South Korea's capital. Word was circulating that northern soldiers disguised in white peasant garb might try to penetrate U.S. lines via refugee groups. The refugees who approached the Second Battalion's lines on July 26 were South Koreans ordered out of two nearby villages by American soldiers, who warned them the North Koreans were coming, Korean claimants told the AP. Declassified records show that First Cavalry Division soldiers did move through that village area the previous three days. As the refugees neared No Gun Ri, leading ox carts, some with children on their backs, American soldiers ordered them off of the southbound dirt road and onto a parallel railroad track, the South Koreans said. Ex-sergeant George Preece remembered the way was being cleared for U.S. Army vehicles. What then happened under the concrete bridge—which stands today, deeply scarred by bullets—cannot be reconstructed in full detail five decades later. Some ex-GIs poured out chilling memories of the scene, but others offered only fragments, or abruptly ended their interviews. No one saw everything: Koreans were cowering under fire, and Americans were dug into positions over hundreds of yards of hilly terrain.

But old soldiers in their seventies and late sixties identified the No Gun Ri bridge from photographs, remembered the approximate dates, and corroborated the core of the Koreans' account: that American troops kept the refugees pinned under the bridge in late July 1950 and killed almost all of them. "It was just whole-

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sale slaughter," said Patterson, of Greer, South Carolina. "We just annihilated them," said Norman Tinkler of Glasco, Kansas. Both Koreans and several ex-GIs said the killing began when American planes suddenly swooped in and strafed an area where the white-clad refugees were resting. Bodies fell everywhere, and terrified parents dragged children into a narrow culvert beneath the tracks, the Koreans told the AP. Declassified U.S. Air Force mission reports from the mid-1950s show that pilots sometimes attacked "people in white," apparently because of suspicions North Korean soldiers were disguised among them. The report for one mission of four F-80 jets, for example, said the airborne controller "said to fire on people in white clothes. We were about 50 in group."

Forward controllers on light planes directed pilots to such unplanned targets in mid-flight. The Korean claimants say a light plane circled their area immediately before the strafing. But ex-GIs said the strafing may have been a mistake. A company commander had called for an airstrike, but against enemy artillery miles up the road, they said. Veteran Delos Flint remembers being caught with other soldiers in the strafing and piling into a culvert with refugees. Then "somebody, maybe our guys, was shooting at us," he said. He and his comrades eventually slipped out. Retired Colonel Robert M. Carroll, then a twenty-five-year-old first lieutenant, remembers battalion riflemen opening fire on the refugees from their foxholes. "This is right after we get orders that nobody comes through, civilian, military, nobody," said Carroll, of Lansdowne, Virginia. That morning, the U.S. Eighth Army had radioed orders throughout the Korean front that began, "No repeat no refugees will be permitted to cross battle lines at any time," according to declassified documents located at the National Archives in Washington. Two days earlier, First Cavalry Division headquarters issued a more explicit order: "No refugees to cross the front line. Fire on everyone trying to cross lines. Use discretion in case of women and children." In the neighboring Twenty-fifth Infantry Division, the commander, Major General William B. Kean, told his troops that since South Koreans were to have been evacuated from the battle zone, "all civilians seen in this area are to be considered as enemy and action taken accordingly." His staff relayed this as "considered as unfriendly and shot."

MILITARY EXPERTS in the law of war told the AP they had never heard of such blanket "kill" orders in the U.S. military. "An order to fire on civilians is patently an illegal order," said retired Colonel Scott Silliman of Duke University, an Air Force lawyer for twenty-five years. Carroll said he "wasn't convinced this was enemy," and he got the rifle companies to cease firing on the refugees. The lieutenant then shepherded a boy to safety under a double-arched concrete railroad bridge nearby, where shaken and wounded Koreans were gathered. He said he saw no threat. "There weren't any North Koreans in there the first day, I'll tell you that. It was mainly women and kids and old men," recalled Carroll, who said he then left the area and knows nothing about what followed. The Americans directed the refugees into the bridge underpasses—each 80 feet long, 23 feet wide, 30 feet high—and after dark opened fire on them from nearby machine-gun positions, the Koreans said. Veterans said Captain Melbourne C. Chandler, after speaking with superior officers by radio, had ordered machine-gunners from his heavy-weapons company to set up near the tunnel mouths and open fire. "Chandler said, 'The hell with all those people. Let's get rid of all of them'," said Eugene Hesselman of Fort Mitchell, Kentucky. "We didn't know if they were North or South Koreans. We were there only a couple of days and we didn't know them from a load of coal." Ex-GIs believe the order was cleared at battalion headquarters, a half-mile to the rear, or at a higher level. Chandler and other key officers are now dead, but the AP was able to locate the colonel who commanded the battalion, Herbert B. Heyer, eighty-eight.

Heyer, of Sandy Springs, Georgia, denied knowing anything about the shootings and said, "I know I didn't give such an order." Veterans said the colonel apparently was leaving battalion operations to subordinates at the time. The bursts of gunfire killed those near the tunnel entrances first, the Korean claimants said. "People pulled dead bodies around them for protection," said Chung Koo-ho, 61. "Mothers

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wrapped their children with blankets and hugged them with their backs toward the entrances.. . .My mother died on the second day of shooting."

Recalled machine-gunner Edward L. Daily: "Some may have been trying to crawl deeper for protection. When you see something like that and you're frightened, you start to claw." During three nights under fire, some trapped refugees managed to slip away, but others were shot as they tried to escape or crawled out to find clean water to drink, the Koreans said. Veterans disagreed on whether gunfire came from the underpasses. Some, like ex-sergeant James T. Kerns of Piedmont, South Carolina, said the Americans were answering fire from among the refugees. Hesselman said, "Every now and then you'd hear a shot, like a rifle shot." But others recalled only heavy barrages of American firepower, not hostile fire. "I don't remember shooting coming out," said ex-rifleman Louis Allen of Bristol, Tennessee. The Koreans said the Americans may have been seeing their own comrades' fire, ricocheting through from the tunnels' opposite ends. That's possible, said Preece. "It could actually have happened, that they were seeing their own fire. . . . We were scared to death," said Preece, a career soldier who later fought in Vietnam.

On July 28, the Seventh Cavalry was told to prepare to pull back again early the next morning. The final barrage still echoes in the memories of old soldiers. "On summer nights when the breeze is blowing, I can still hear their cries, the little kids screaming," said Daily, of Clarksville, Tennessee, who went on to earn a battlefield commission in Korea. Sounds of slaughter haunt Park Hee-sook's memory, too. "I can still hear the moans of women dying in a pool of blood," said Park, then a girl of sixteen. "Children cried and clung to their dead mothers." Not everyone fired, veterans said. "Some of us did and some of us didn't," said Flint, of Clio, Michigan, the soldier who had been briefly caught in the culvert with the refugees. "... I wouldn't fire at anybody in the tunnel like that. It was civilians just trying to hide." Kerns, a machine gunner, said he fired over the refugees' heads. "I would not fire into a bunch of women." Once the fury subsided, Kerns said, he, Preece, and another GI found at least seven dead North Korean soldiers in the underpasses, wearing uniforms under peasant white. But Preece, of Dunville, Kentucky, said he doesn't remember making such a search or even hearing that North Koreans were found. None of the other veterans, when asked, remembered seeing North Koreans. Kerns also said weapons were recovered. Hesselman said someone later displayed a submachine gun. Preece recalled only "hearsay" about weapons.

ALL TWENTY-FOUR South Korean survivors interviewed individually by the AP said they remembered no North Koreans or gunfire directed at the Americans. Secret U.S. military intelligence reports from those days, since declassified, place the North Korean front line four miles from No Gun Ri on July 26, when the refugees entered the underpasses. Early on July 29, the 7th Cavalry pulled back. North Korean troops who moved in found "about 400 bodies of old and young people and children," the North Korean newspaper Cho Sun In Min Bo reported three weeks later. Some ex-GIs today estimate 100 or fewer were killed. But those close to the bridge, from Chandler's H Company, generally put the total at about 200. "A lot" also were killed in the strafing, they say. The North Koreans buried some dead in unknown locations and surviving relatives buried others, the villagers said. Because families then scattered across South Korea, the claimants said, they have the names of only 130 dead, primarily their own relatives. At First Cavalry headquarters, division commander Major General Hobart R. Gay was told South Korean refugees were killed by North Korean troops in a crossfire at No Gun Ri, the division information officer recalled. "I think that's what he believed," said Howard D. Steward, an ex-colonel from San Diego. Relevant unit documents say nothing about a crossfire, about North Korean soldiers killed under a bridge, or anything else about No Gun Ri.

The villagers say they tried to file a compensation claim with a U.S. claims office in Seoul in 1960, but were told they missed a deadline. Later, they say, Korean police warned one man, survivor Yang Hae-chan, to keep quiet about the 1950 events. But as authoritarian South Korea liberalized in the 1990s, they revived their case

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and sent petitions to Washington. None was acknowledged, they say. In August 1997, a claim signed by thirty petitioners was filed with South Korea's Government Compensation Committee. Having researched histories, they pointed a finger at the First Cavalry. In response, the U.S. Armed Forces Claims Service said there was "no evidence . . . to show that the U.S. First Cavalry Division was in the area." A lower-level South Korean compensation committee said people were killed at No Gun Ri but it had no proof of U.S. involvement. In April 1998, the national panel rejected the case, saying a five-year statute of limitations expired long ago.

The AP subsequently reconstructed unit movements from map coordinates in declassified war records. They showed that four First Cavalry Division battalions were in the area at the time of the alleged incident. Months of tracing veterans—some 130 interviews by telephone and in person—then pinpointed the companies involved. The AP also pored through hundreds of boxes of once-secret documents at the National Archives and other repositories to find pieces of the story.

The laws and customs of war condemn indiscriminate killing of civilians, even if a few enemy soldiers are among a large number of noncombatants killed, military experts note. The Korean War record shows army courts-martial only for individual murders of Koreans, nothing on a large scale. As for civil liability, the U.S. government is largely protected by U.S. law against foreign claims related to "combatant activities." The Korean claimants say the killings were not combat-related—the enemy was miles away.

"We want the truth, justice and due respect for our human rights," they wrote in a 1997 petition to President Clinton. One ex-GI objects that "a bunch of lawyers" can't run a war. "War is not just," said Norman Tinkler. "There's things that goes on that we can't comprehend, but it has to be done. And it's the individual that has to make the decision."

But others who were there said No Gun Ri didn't have to happen. The refugees could have been screened up on the road or checked out under the bridge, Kerns and Hesselman said. "The command looked at it as getting rid of the problem in the easiest way. That was to shoot them in a group," said Daily. Today, he said, "we all share a guilt feeling, something that remains with everyone." The late Colonel Gilmon A. Huff, who took over the Second Battalion from Heyer three days after the pullback from No Gun Ri, was interviewed before his death earlier this year and said he knew nothing of what happened at the bridge. But he "heard" about refugee killings and told his men it was wrong, Huff said at his Abbeville, South Carolina, home. "You can't kill people just for being there," he told the AP. •

SANG-HUN CHOE, CHARLES J. HANLEY, and MARTHA MENDOZA are AP staff writers.

CHANGES

With this issue, Brian Morton steps down as executive editor of *Dissent*, a position he held (with different titles) for seventeen years. Brian played a decisive role in shaping the editorial style and policies of the magazine; we will miss his intelligence and devotion. Together with Mark Levinson, he will continue to run our Books section; and he will consult with us regularly on writers and themes.

David Glenn, who arrived as an intern in 1992, returned as an editorial assistant in 1995, and was associate editor for the last few years, has also left his position here in order to write full time in Milwaukee before moving to northern California later this year. He will continue to write for *Dissent* and to work to strengthen our ties to the next generation—his generation—of writers on the left.

Kira Brunner and Rachel Neumann are the new assistant editors of the magazine. Kira has worked as an editor in New York and is a graduate student in philosophy at the New School. Rachel has an MFA in fiction writing from the New School and also works as a writing teacher and freelance writer and editor. Both have already written for *Dissent*. They can be reached on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays in our new office at 310 Riverside Drive, Suite 1201, New York, N.Y. 10025, phone (212) 316-3120; fax (212) 316-3145. —Eds

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RESPONSES

Michael Walzer

BACK IN THE 1960s, I criticized the Vietnam War, in part, by contrasting it with the Korean War. This was a way of distinguishing myself, and the part of the antiwar movement to which I belonged, from those leftists who insisted that no American war could possibly be just. It was also a way of arguing that Stalinist aggression sometimes required a military as well as a political response. I still believe that the massive invasion of the South by the North Korean army should have been resisted—even if, as we have now learned, the forces that led the resistance committed criminal acts. But it is important to acknowledge the crimes and examine their causes.

Some of the causes are easy, even comforting, to list, and so they were immediately evoked by people eager to defend, if not quite to justify, the killings described in the above AP dispatch. The American soldiers involved in the massacre were raw recruits, rushed into combat from Japan, and they were in headlong retreat. These are circumstances that, in many wars, have made for both rage and panic, emotions more easily directed against the civilian population than the attacking army. Frightened and inexperienced soldiers are more likely to kill both brutally and randomly; military discipline reduces civilian casualties. But this can be, at best, only a partial explanation of what happened at No Gun Ri. For the killings there were not committed "in the heat of battle." They seem to have been the direct result of orders issued from U.S. Army headquarters, and the officers giving the orders were surely not raw recruits. They were veterans of World War II, which ended only five years before the killings at the bridge, and which was followed by a major effort, at Nuremberg and Tokyo, to teach future generations a lesson about the crimes of war. No Gun Ri is a case of refusing to remember the lesson.

The trials had barely ended in 1950, but it is now clear that American officers had not acquired that heightened awareness of noncombatant immunity that Nuremberg and Tokyo should have taught—nor had they incorporated this awareness into the training of new soldiers. It couldn't have been possible to study accounts of the Nuremberg trials and then issue the command that came from the First Cavalry Division: "No refugees to cross the front line. Fire [at] everyone trying to cross lines. Use discretion in case of women and children." It couldn't have been possible to undergo a training in military ethics and then obey commands of that kind. Discretion is just what soldiers don't have when they confront civilians.

Clearly, American officers, coached perhaps by their Korean counterparts, believed these to be hostile civilians: "all civilians seen in this area are to be considered as enemy and action taken accordingly." That same perception, spread across the whole of the civilian population, was critical in making Vietnam an unjust war. You can't fight in defense of another country if you have to fight against the ordinary citizens of that same country. There is a deep contradiction in such a war, which appears here too in the Korean case, at least "in this area." (But in Korea we were also fighting against a large-scale conventional invasion.)

IT IS IMPORTANT to notice that many soldiers on the ground did not perceive the hostility of the civilians huddled under the bridge at No Gun Ri, did not consider them a military threat, did not believe that they harbored enemy soldiers. Some of the perceptions of innocence reported in the AP dispatch may be retrospective, nourished by a kind of moral hindsight, but some of them sound plausible enough. The probability seems overwhelming that U.S. soldiers could have withdrawn safely without shooting at these civilian refugees–and that the officers on the spot knew, or should have known, that they could. In any case, they were bound to try; massacres are not "discretionary."

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I am not sure what should happen now. Let's assume (what may be doubtful) that the official investigation confirms the AP account, that the commission avoids a whitewash and produces what might be called a strong reckoning. There would then have to be some kind of compensation for the victims and perhaps some further inquiry into the behavior of the individual commanders. It probably doesn't make sense, at this distance, to bring them to trial, but their standing in the annals of the U.S. Army should certainly be called into question. And there should also be something more: some kind of public acknowledgment that putting enemy soldiers on trial for war crimes—as we did, and rightly did, after World War II—is no barrier to war crimes of one's own. The only barrier is an army, and a political leadership, committed at every level to ensuring that the wars it fights are not murderous. ●

MICHAEL WALZER is co-editor of *Dissent* and author of *Just and Unjust Wars*, among other works.

Marilyn B. Young

THE AMERICAN public has grown accustomed to the notion that very bad things happened in Vietnam—though for the entire ten year period, only one bad thing, My Lai, was accorded the label "atrocity." The war in Korea, which the U.S. public has had difficulty knowing how to remember (and which historians designate "forgotten"), was—when thought about at all—seen as a coda to World War II rather than a prologue to Vietnam. It was a war more unpopular than Vietnam, but unlike Vietnam its unpopularity was forgotten except by the politicians who drew from it specific and limited lessons: do not lose a country; avoid Chinese intervention. And it ended where it began—South Korea saved for the free world, North Korea properly chastised, the Chinese contained within their borders. Not quite a victory, perhaps, but not a defeat, and as rapidly as could be, a war that in the main was attended to only by Americans who had relatives fighting there was filed away.

There were lingering issues—particularly the alleged collaboration of large numbers of American prisoners of war—but few wondered why the war had occurred or doubted its necessity. The only atrocities associated with it were attributed to North Koreans and Chinese troops. This is hardly unusual. As one expert in military law put it: "Battlefield war crimes committed by one's own forces are almost never charged as such. Instead, they are simply alleged as the Uniform Code of Military Justice offenses of murder, rape or aggravated assault.... They are denominated war crimes only if committed by enemy nationals." (No one at My Lai, for example, was charged with having committed a war crime.) And then one fall day in 1999, the *New York Times* published, on its front page, an Associated Press story about an event that had taken place under a railroad bridge near No Gun Ri in South Korea in July 1950.

The event was a massacre. Korean refugees, ordered out of their villages by American troops, were strafed by U.S. planes and then herded by U. S. soldiers under a railroad bridge and fired upon—in some accounts over a three-day period—as they huddled there for safety. The number of dead remains in dispute, though it is likely to have been several hundred and perhaps as many as four hundred. It seemed initially an inassimilable story, misplaced in the wrong war. All but historians of the Korean War were taken by surprise.

The same articles reporting what happened under the bridge incorporated in their accounts a set of extenuating circumstances. First, the civilians had given cause, because North Korean soldiers were known to infiltrate refugee columns in order to get behind U.S. lines. Second, the soldiers themselves did not really represent the U.S. military. They were untrained troops suddenly catapulted into combat from their comfortable occupation duty in Japan. Third, the circumstances were particularly fraught: U.S. troops were in chaotic retreat, confusion reigned, there was danger of being

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wiped out entirely. The connection between these factors and the orders the soldiers received to kill everyone huddling under the railroad bridge is left implicit.

The manner in which No Gun Ri has been considered, so that it could be, like the Korean War itself, simultaneously noted and forgotten, is perhaps best illustrated by an op-ed piece for the *Wall Street Journal* written by James Webb, Vietnam veteran, novelist and former secretary of the navy. Webb's opening sentence is masterful: "I do not know what happened to the civilians at the bridge near the village of No Gun Ri," he writes, "although it seems clear from recent AP reports that many of them died in the early days of the Korean War as their country was being ripped apart by a communist invasion and the U.S. Army was thrown into disarray." In this economical beginning, Webb sets the terms: probably civilians died, but in the mitigating context of enemy invasion and American helplessness. Next he suggests the questions that will be asked as the Army investigates: "Did the refugees die from American bombs and bullets? If so, were the deaths deliberate? If they were, were they the result of battlefield realities that left them caught in the middle?" As the American reader moves through the list, each successive question answers the preceding one so that by the end it is logical to conclude that yes, civilian refugees were killed by Americans, perhaps deliberately, but the deaths were the result of "battlefield realities." A "battlefield reality" that requires armed men to slaughter unarmed people is a re-naming of mass murder. The full circumstances in which orders were given to commit mass murder has remained unexamined in the press. It will not do to argue that North Korean soldiers (or more local guerrillas) *may* have infiltrated the ranks of civilian refugees. There is evidence that, in this instance, they did not. But what must be examined is the history of a war that required U.S. troops to engage in a civil conflict in a foreign country—a war bound therefore to produce "incidents" like No Gun Ri.

THIS IS THE war, under-reported but still visible, the American public rejected at the time and refused to think about, then or later. For the past twenty years the Pentagon has insisted that nothing at all happened at No Gun Ri. In the light of the disclosures, the Pentagon assured survivors it would look into the matter carefully as "a tribute to the shared sacrifices of the Korean and American people during the Korean War." A statement issued by survivors after meeting with Pentagon officials put it a little differently: "[The] No Gun Ri Holocaust is the massacre of innocent people, committed by the U.S. military forces who pursued only [the] efficiency of their military operation, totally ignoring human rights."

One can remember an atrocity and forget the war that made that atrocity if not inevitable then at least more than passing likely. Atrocity stories then become only another, if rather grim, way of forgetting. ●

MARILYN B. YOUNG is professor of history at New York University and author of *The Vietnam Wars 1945-1990.*

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Unforgettable Vietnam and its Burdens

Twenty-Five Years After the War's End

Todd Gitlin

THE AFTERLIFE of the Vietnam War has lasted longer now than the war itself. Time makes new wounds. A host of legends clamor to make the disaster mean something.

First things first. Symbolic Vietnam ought not to obscure the existence of the actual Vietnam, or rather, actual Vietnams, places and people who make up a country that lives apart from metaphorical meanings in American minds. It is reported, I hope accurately, that President Clinton wants to visit the actual Vietnam during his last year in office. Such a visit would surely be healthy for Americans and probably also for the Vietnamese. Americans may not be the most ethnocentric of peoples but we are surely not the least ethnocentric either; nothing begins to make a territory real to the American consciousness—that blur at once parochial and ethereal—than for it to become, for one shining moment, the object of the cameras and scribblers that accompany an American president on tour. For all our decades of argument, grief, "healing," and highly selective memory since the last American soldier switched off the light at the end of the tunnel; for all the symbolic deployments of one or another "Vietnam" as markers of American manhood, or treachery, or error, few Americans know more than a cliché or two about the place that three American presidents found to be worth devastating in the name of historical good. It would be useful for the media to devote to Vietnam one ten-thousandth of the attention lavished upon greatest hits lists. At the least, we owe some of our precious attention to the society of living Vietnamese.

The actual Vietnam is, of course, the place where some two to three million Vietnamese died in an unwarranted, disgraceful war, and where much physical injury persists. Although there is plenty of blame to distribute, surely the moral statute of limitations on American responsibility has not run out. In particular, there are the many victims of Agent Orange and other gruesome weapons of war to whom the United States owes assistance. There are also the here-and-now Vietnamese working in often miserable factories making shoes for Nike and other American companies. Their well-being ought to be a matter of interest to an American president looking for legacies.

So some knowledge of the actual Vietnam would be fitting. Odds are that the uses and misuses of symbolic Vietnam will continue. It is probably inevitable that memories of unique events, especially traumatic ones, harden under the pressures of history into precedents and prototypes; people will go on fighting over the meanings of huge histories they barely begin to understand. One intellectual stratagem is to revive the great game of dominoes. In a tendentious new book that received deferential reviews last fall but royally deserved the thumping it got from Eric Alterman (*Dissent*, Winter 2000) Michael Lind defends the war as an unavoidable move in an indisputably righteous and retrospectively cleansed cold war. Regardless of how one evaluates radical and liberal criticisms of the cold war, one thing that strikes me is Lind's nostalgia for the glory days when particular characteristics of countries could be dispensed with. The only thing that mattered about dominoes was which of two possible positions they came in: vertical (good, free) or horizontal (bad, unfree).

Since his conclusions are preset, Lind does not feel required to explore the real Vietnam. That Vietnam, the subject of much scholarship, is only a pawn in a great game. In the meantime, Ho is Mao is Stalin; Southeast Asia is Korea is Germany. With a hop, skip, and jump

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through the scholarship—the stuff he likes no less breezily than the stuff he doesn't—Lind is an energetic but indiscriminate debunker, as fierce with his cheap shots as with his more considered ones. He is untroubled by a myriad of facts challenging the coherence of American rationales, facts that historian Fredrik Logevall deploys in a worthy, far bulkier (but far more absorbing and careful) scholarly work that received little attention last year, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam*. But that is the rhetorical point: Lind's "Vietnam" is only, and purely, symbolic; a place in a proxy war, nothing more. A whole-hearted "realist," Lind knows well that the United States was not fighting for freedom or democracy in Vietnam, but only to defeat the Soviet Union and China (the two compose a glutinous mass, as he sees them). He wants his cold war all of a piece. If you like the way it turned out, in his view, you have got to swallow Vietnam, just as, if you like the way World War II turned out, you should be equally glad for the pulverizing of Dresden. Or, say, the Soviets turning the tide at Stalingrad—not that the latter analogy would please Lind.

LIND WANTS "Vietnam" to be a usable symbol of the excellence of American armed force. He aims to conquer Vietnam by enlisting its specter in a retroactive crusade. In this, he is the counterpart of maximal interventionists who want, like George Bush père, to "kick the Vietnam syndrome once and for all." Maximal interventionists, mainly Republicans, have learned their own lessons from Vietnam, namely: go in big, fast, and overwhelmingly, go in with allies, go in popular, exit fast. Since 1975, the same post-Vietnam objections crop up—objections worth taking seriously—whenever an American president contemplates using military force for any purpose. Instantly, the president finds himself staring at a topography of quagmires and slippery slopes. He is haunted by the fates of presidents who were ruined by Vietnam directly (Johnson) or in a paranoid spasm against the antiwar movement (Nixon). Wherever possible, therefore, a post-Vietnam president fights weekend wars, like Reagan in Grenada and Libya, and Bush in Panama; or sneaky proxy wars, like Reagan in El Salvador and Nicaragua; or he withdraws troops at the first sign of a shoot-out, like Reagan in Lebanon and Clinton in Somalia. Like George H. W. Bush in Kuwait and Bill Clinton in Kosovo, he assembles an alliance of magnitude, and seeks, if possible, sanctions by the UN Security Council. Like Bush—before he transformed Desert Shield into Desert Storm—he tolerates a congressional debate that confers, if not quite a declaration of war, then a certain political mandate.

So Vietnam has proved to be a cautionary ghost, a useful guardian for a country possessed of unsurpassed power and a pronounced tendency toward false innocence. Yet useful specters can also be overly influential, like the specter of Munich hovering over Vietnam itself. As Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor show, along with the negative example of Rwanda (which illustrates the cost of inaction), there arise strong claims for the use of international force. People of good will cannot be deaf to them. The invocation of symbolic Vietnam is not automatically a conclusive response. With the melting away of the cold war—and therefore the symbolic meaning of Vietnam—there remains some need for an ordering principle in the world, to set limits to tyranny exercised within national boundaries, particularly if there is no plausible alternative to the use of outside force. If we accept this—and how can a believer in human rights not accept it?—then we must also accept the material consequence. An ordering principle is another term for a police force. As UN secretary-general Kofi Annan has proposed, the United Nations would be the most legitimate base for such a force, preferably composed of citizens from nations that cannot reasonably be accused of imperial ambitions. True, the United Nations derives its authority from today's nation-states and some of them have moral statures that are far from impeccable. But there is no alternative. Sometime in the next century—before a war fought with weapons of mass destruction, if we are lucky—such a force needs to come into being. Toward this end—as a reminder of the need for an alternative to great-power mania—the specter of Vietnam may perform its last useful service.

Pending that glad day when an international constabulary can resist genocide and other

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crimes against humanity, it falls to improvised alliances, especially regionally focused ones, to take cross-border action when peaceful means are exhausted. The United States, by dint of its military might, is likely to be central to such alliances, and to be both loved and hated for it. In this setting, which is not the best of all possible settings but is the only one that exists, a Vietnam-inspired "No" to all American intervention will amount to a vote of confidence in local despots. I fail to see why an absolute "no" should be the automatic cry of the left or of veterans of the movement against the Vietnam war. The better response: let's look at the options.

Invoking Vietnam as if it were the preordained conclusion of all foreign-policy arguments past and future rather than a legitimate—and important—caution can be an impediment to wise action. Much of the European left understands this, especially the governing social democratic left in the European Union. Some do not. Some of the American left, with its heavier burden of symbolic Vietnam, do not either. The ultraleft is haunted by its own Vietnam specter, and takes Vietnam as a symbol of the irredeemability of America, the finality of its wickedness, its absolute taint. For absolute pacifists, there is no difficulty in a case like Kosovo: war is war is war. For everyone else, the specter of Vietnam is like the ghost of the senior Hamlet: remember me. It adds: caution, yes. Hesitation, absolutely. Tell no lies. Duck no difficult questions. The Vietnam memorial is engraved in stone, but the future is not. ●

TODD GITLIN's most recent book is the novel *Sascrifice*.

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The Third Way/*Die Neue Mitte*

Tony Blair and Gerhard Schroeder

This manifesto, issued by the prime ministers of Britain and Germany, seemed to us to warrant critical attention, which we asked Joanne Barkan, one of our editors, to provide. EDS.

Annotated by Joanne Barkan

SOCIAL DEMOCRATS are in government in almost all the countries of the European Union. Social democracy has found new acceptance—but only because, while retaining its traditional values, it has begun in a credible way to renew its ideas and modernize its programs. It has also found new acceptance because it stands not only for social justice but also for economic dynamism and the unleashing of creativity and innovation.

The trademark of this approach is the New Center in Germany and the Third Way in the United Kingdom. Other social democrats choose other terms that suit their own national cultures. But though the language and the institutions may differ, the motivation is everywhere the same. Most people have long since abandoned the worldview represented by the dogmas of left and right. Social democrats must be able to speak to those people.

Fairness and social justice, liberty and equality of opportunity, solidarity and responsibility to others—these values are timeless. Social democracy will never sacrifice them. To make these values relevant to today's world requires realistic and forward-looking policies capable of meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century. Modernization is about adapting to conditions that have objectively changed, and not reacting to polls.

Similarly, we need to apply our politics within a new economic framework, modernized for today, where government does all it can to support enterprise but never believes it is a substitute for enterprise. The essential function of markets must be complemented and improved by political action, not hampered by

Doesn't it matter politically whether Soc. Dem.s are in government by themselves or in coalition? Or whether their partners are left parties or centrists? Is there a difference anymore between a left government and a center-left one?

Did social democracy really not stand for these things before? After World War Two, "modernization" was always an Italian left (Socialist and Communist) theme. Didn't the Swedish Social Democratic Party always stand for economic dynamism?

What were these "dogmas" exactly? If European conservatives traditionally stood for "market liberalization," how have they and their supporters changed? Is it possible, instead, to say that the basic values of the left (social justice) and the right (free markets) still hold?

So what do we accept that most people have abandoned?

But didn't the Blair and Schroeder election campaigns do exactly this? Isn't reliance on polls a feature of the new, modern, non-ideological politics?

This applies to Swedish Soc. Dem. since the 1930s. Their "classic" soc. dem. model was "make the market work"—for everyone.

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it. We support a market economy, not a market society.

We share a common destiny within the European Union. We face the same challenges—to promote employment and prosperity, to offer every individual the opportunity to fulfill their unique potential, to combat social exclusion and poverty, to reconcile material progress with environmental sustainability and our responsibility to future generations, to tackle common problems that threaten the cohesion of society such as crime and drugs, and to make Europe a more effective force for good in the world.

We need to strengthen our policies by benchmarking our experiences in Britain and Germany, and also with like-minded counterparts in Europe and the rest of the world. We must learn from each other and measure our own performance against best practice and experience in other countries. With this appeal, we invite other European social democratic governments who share our modernizing aims to join us in this enterprise.

I. Learning from Experience

Although both parties can be proud of our historic achievements, today we must develop realistic and feasible answers to new challenges confronting our societies and economies. This requires adherence to our values but also a willingness to change our old approaches and traditional policy instruments. In the past:

- The promotion of social justice was sometimes confused with the imposition of equality of outcome. The result was a neglect of the importance of rewarding effort and responsibility, and the association of social democracy with conformity and mediocrity rather than the celebration of creativity, diversity, and excellence. Work was burdened with ever higher costs.
- The means of achieving social justice became identified with ever higher levels of public spending regardless of what they achieved or the impact of the taxes required to fund it on competitiveness, employment, and living standards. Decent public services are a vital concern for social democrats, but social conscience cannot be measured by the level of public expenditure. The real test for society is

Why pretend that these two can be neatly or completely separated?

This stance is so generic that it sounds like the rhetoric of the right and left in Europe since the 1970s.

While substantial equality of opportunity is the best goal of Soc. Dem., it implies some degree of equality of outcome (certainly more than exists in the U.S. and some European nations today). Huge disparities of outcome are what undermine (future) opportunity. The real questions are how much of each is needed and how best to achieve them.

This statement accepts too easily and too completely all the assumptions of conservative idealogues. Good public schools for everyone, health care, public transportation, etc. are necessary to create social justice. Historically, soc. dem. societies collected and spent more tax money to build these. Spent effectively, the money improves competitiveness, employment, and living standards.

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how effectively this expenditure is used and how much it enables people to help themselves.

• The belief that the state should address damaging market failures all too often led to a disproportionate expansion of the government's reach and the bureaucracy that went with it. The balance between the individual and the collective was distorted. Values that are important to citizens, such as personal achievement and success, entrepreneurial spirit, individual responsibility and community spirit, were too often subordinated to universal social safeguards.

• Too often rights were elevated above responsibilities, but the responsibility of the individual to his or her family, neighborhood and society cannot be offloaded onto the state. If the concept of mutual obligation is forgotten, this results in a decline in community spirit, lack of responsibility towards neighbours, rising crime and vandalism, and a legal system that cannot cope.

• The ability of national governments to fine-tune the economy in order to secure growth and jobs has been exaggerated. The importance of individual and business enterprise to the creation of wealth has been undervalued. The weaknesses of markets have been overstated and their strengths underestimated.

II. New Programs for Changed Realities

Ideas of what is "left-wing" should never become an ideological straitjacket.

The politics of the New Center and Third Way is about addressing the concerns of people who live and cope with societies undergoing rapid change—both winners and losers. In this newly emerging world people want politicians who approach issues without ideological preconceptions and who, applying their values and principles, search for practical solutions to their problems through honest, well-constructed, and pragmatic policies. Voters who in their daily lives have to display initiative and adaptability in the face of economic and social change expect the same from their governments and their politicians.

• In a world of ever more rapid globalization and scientific changes we need to create the conditions in which existing businesses can

Third Way types never openly confront how very expensive this is. Effective job training (with necessary child care, health care, and travel allowances) costs much more in public funding than welfare. And it's worth the money.

True for those governments that regularly took over failed private enterprises. But this has never been a necessary component of social democracy. The "Swedish Model" worked in the opposite way. The solidaristic wage policy and centralized contract bargaining allowed inefficient firms to fail and rewarded dynamism, to the benefit of labor, and not just capital.

Many people argue that universal safeguards (such as health care) foster solidarity and build a cohesive citizenry. So exactly what is meant by "community spirit" here?

This is very much open to debate (on the left, too). Doesn't Alan Greenspan "fine tune" levels of economic growth and unemployment here? Couldn't the EU central bank create more growth in Europe?

Third Way-ers exaggerate the opposite—the market panacea.

Globalization (its characteristics and effects on nation-based soc. dem.) is analyzed seriously nowhere in this document, and yet globalization is the changed reality that supposedly makes the old soc. dem. inadequate. Unfettered globalization is accepted as the necessary and unalterable context. But if national governments have lost →

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power over the economy, who has that power now? And why can't a strong, rich region like the EU do something about it?

If anything defines Third Way policy, it's the programmatic emphasis on education and training for jobs in the "new economy." But training for the job doesn't create the job — a criticism leveled at Robert Reich for years.

This is European code for being able to fire people more easily and lower wages. Does this policy make any sense before anyone figures out how to create good jobs in these economies?

What about the position that cleaning up and protecting the environment creates jobs. Wasn't that a better position for the left?

Two important caveats: 1) some public services (child care, nursing, education) don't lend themselves positively to quantitative types of efficiency. 2) Competition within the public sector must be done carefully or you get new distortions (e.g. trying to introduce competition between hospitals in Britain and physicians in Sweden).

Truly vacuous.

prosper and adapt, and new businesses can be set up and grow.

- New technologies radically change the nature of work and internationalize the organization of production. With one hand they de-skill and make some businesses obsolete, with another they create new business and vocational opportunities. The most important task of modernization is to invest in human capital: to make the individual and businesses fit for the knowledge-based economy of the future.
- Having the same job for life is a thing of the past. Social democrats must accommodate the growing demands for flexibility—and at the same time maintain minimum social standards, help families to cope with change, and open up fresh opportunities for those who are unable to keep pace.
- We face an increasing challenge in reconciling environmental responsibility towards future generations with material progress for society at large. We must marry environmental responsibility with a modern market-based approach. In environmental protection, the most modern technologies consume fewer resources, open up new markets, and create new jobs.
- Public expenditure as a proportion of national income has more or less reached the limits of acceptability. Constraints on "tax and spend" force radical modernization of the public sector and reform of public services to achieve better value for money. The public sector must actually serve the citizen: we do not hesitate to promote the concepts of efficiency, competition, and high performance.
- Social security systems need to adapt to changes in life expectancy, family structures, and the role of women. Social democrats need to find ways of combating the ever more pressing problems of crime, social disintegration, and drug abuse. We need to take the lead in shaping a society with equal rights for women and men.
- Crime is a vital political issue for modern social democrats. We consider safety on the street to be a civil right. A policy to make cities worth living in fosters community spirit, creates new jobs, and makes residential areas safer.
- Poverty remains a central concern, especially among families with children. We need spe-

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cific measures for those who are most threatened by marginalization and social exclusion.

This also requires a modern approach to government:

- The state should not row, but steer: not so much control, as challenge. Solutions to problems must be joined up.
- Within the public sector bureaucracy at all levels must be reduced, performance targets and objectives formulated, the quality of public services rigorously monitored, and bad performance rooted out.
- Modern social democrats solve problems where they can best be solved. Some problems can now only be tackled at the European level: others, such as the recent financial crises, require increased international cooperation. But, as a general principle, power should be devolved to the lowest possible level.

For the new politics to succeed, it must promote a go-ahead mentality and a new entrepreneurial spirit at all levels of society. That requires:

- a competent and well-trained workforce eager and ready to take on new responsibilities
- a social security system that opens up new opportunities and encourages initiative, creativity, and readiness to take on new challenges
- a positive climate for entrepreneurial independence and initiative. Small businesses must become easier to set up and better able to survive
- we want a society which celebrates successful entrepreneurs just as it does artists and footballers—and which values creativity in all spheres of life.

Our countries have different traditions in dealings between state, industry, trade unions, and social groups, but we share a conviction that traditional conflicts at the workplace must be overcome. This, above all, means rekindling a spirit of community and solidarity, strengthening partnership and dialogue between all groups in society, and developing a new consensus for change and reform. We want all groups in society to share our joint commitment to the new directions set out in this Declaration.

Immediately upon taking office, the new Social Democratic government in Germany gathered the top representatives of the politi-

Such as . . . ? Completely vague.

Isn't steering an important type of control—control of direction?

Bloated bureaucracy wasn't necessarily a problem for soc. dem. The useful question is why it was in some places (Italy) and not others (Sweden).

Will this "new entrepreneurial spirit" also end the tax breaks, subsidies, and corporate bailouts typical of post-World War Two capitalism?

What about a society that celebrates successful teachers? Wouldn't that move us closer to the kind of values we want? Do entrepreneurs really suffer from a lack of celebration? And don't most of our sports stars and other celebrities already turn themselves into entrepreneurs?

As long as ownership, control, and profits belong to one group that employs the other, can there ever be an end to conflict? Doesn't an end to traditional conflict imply that the less powerful will capitulate? What's wrong with conflict if it's played out in negotiations? During Swedish soc. dem.'s heyday, the strength of the unions (85-90% of the workforce) made productive negotiations possible. There were very few strikes, but that didn't mean there was no conflict.

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What about "co-determination" — part of the German soc.dem. model for a few decades. What does the Third Way have to say about that experience?

cal sector, the business community, and the unions around the table to forge an Alliance for Jobs, Training and Competitiveness.

- We want to see real partnership at work, with employees having the opportunity of sharing the rewards of success with employers.
- We support modern trade unions protecting individuals against arbitrary behavior, and working in co-operation with employers to manage change and create long-term prosperity.
- In Europe—under the umbrella of a European employment pact—we will strive to pursue an ongoing dialogue with the social partners that supports, not hinders, necessary economic change.

III. A New Supply-Side Agenda for the Left

The task facing Europe is to meet the challenge of the global economy while maintaining social cohesion in the face of real and perceived uncertainty. Rising employment and expanding job opportunities are the best guarantee of a cohesive society.

A) Doesn't it matter how deep and widespread the economic expansion is? What about societies like Thailand that have booms with new jobs and much greater opportunity for some but certainly not all? What is cohesive about growing disparities and desperate people flocking to cities? B) What about the cultural question? Do shopping plazas, hotels, banks, and nightclubs make for a cohesive society?

The past two decades of neoliberal laissez-faire are over. In its place, however, there must not be a renaissance of 1970s-style reliance on deficit spending and heavy-handed state intervention. Such an approach now points in the wrong direction.

While not relying on 1970s-style deficit spending, social democrats should also avoid demonizing a useful tool for dealing with economic downturns.

Our national economies and global economic relationships have undergone profound change. New conditions and new realities call for a re-evaluation of old ideas and the development of new concepts.

In much of Europe unemployment is far too high—and a high proportion of it is structural. To address this challenge, Europe's social democrats must together formulate and implement a new supply-side agenda for the left.

Does the demand side have no positive relevance now?

Our aim is to modernize the welfare state, not dismantle it: to embark on new ways of expressing solidarity and responsibility to others without basing the motivation for economic activity on pure, undiluted self-interest.

The main elements of this approach are as follows:

A robust and competitive market framework

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Product market competition and open trade are essential to stimulate productivity and growth. For that reason a framework that allows market forces to work properly is essential to economic success and a pre-condition of a more successful employment policy.

- The EU should continue to act as a resolute force for liberalization of world trade.
- The EU should build on the achievements of the single market to strengthen an economic framework conducive to productivity growth.

That's all?! What about the need to moderate destabilizing capital flows? And to guarantee labor rights, human rights, and environmental protections? After anti-WTO demonstrations in Seattle, even prototypical Third Way-er Bill Clinton had much better rhetoric on this question.

A tax policy to promote sustainable growth

In the past social democrats became identified with high taxes, especially on business. Modern social democrats recognize that in the right circumstances, tax reform and tax cuts can play a critical part in meeting their wider social objectives.

For instance, corporate tax cuts raise profitability and strengthen the incentives to invest. Higher investment expands economic activity and increases productive potential. It helps create a virtuous circle of growth, increasing the resources available for public spending on social purposes.

Doesn't Keynes's "pushing on a string" make a crucial point here? Businesses invest when they see market opportunities. Lower tax rates don't directly increase productive investment. They might instead create more disparity in wealth and underfund government. If there is a limit on how high business taxes can go, what is it? Are we below the limit in the USA? Are any EU countries really above it?

- The taxation of companies should be simplified and corporation tax rates cut, as they have been by New Labour in the United Kingdom and are planned by the federal government in Germany.
- To ensure work pays and to improve the fairness of the tax system, the tax burden borne by working families and workers should be alleviated, as begun in Germany (through the Tax Relief Act) and by the introduction of lower starting rates of income tax and the working families tax credit in Britain.
- The willingness and ability of enterprises—especially small and medium-sized enterprises—to invest should be enhanced, as intended by the Social Democratic government in Germany through the reform of the taxes on businesses and as shown by New Labour's reform of capital gains and business taxes in Britain.
- Overall, the taxation of hard work and enterprise should be reduced. The burden of taxation should be re-balanced, for example toward environmental "bads." Germany, the United

Can tax disincentives ever work as well to protect the environment as strict regulations?

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Kingdom, and other European countries governed by social democrats will lead the way in this regard.

- At the EU level, tax policy should support tough action to combat unfair competition and fight tax evasion. This requires enhanced co-operation, not uniformity. We will not support measures leading to a higher tax burden and jeopardizing competitiveness and jobs in the EU.

Demand and supply-side policies go together—they are not alternatives

In the past social democrats often gave the impression that the objectives of growth and low unemployment would be achieved by successful demand management alone. Modern social democrats recognize that supply-side policies have a central and complementary role to play.

In today's world most policy decisions have an impact on both supply- and demand-side conditions.

But what's to be done if the supply of labor is too great?

- Successful welfare-to-work programs raise incomes for those previously out of work as well as improve the supply of labor available to employers.
- Modern economic policy aims to increase the after-tax income of workers and at the same time decrease the costs of labor to the employer. The reduction of non-wage labor costs through structural reform of social security systems and a more employment-friendly tax and contribution structure that looks to the future is therefore of particular importance.

Doesn't this help one group (younger workers) at the expense of another group (retired people)? Would poverty among elderly people increase?

The aim of social democratic policy is to overcome the apparent contradiction between demand- and supply-side policies in favor of a fruitful combination of micro-economic flexibility and macro-economic stability.

To achieve higher growth and more jobs in today's world, economies must be adaptable: flexible markets are a modern social democratic aim.

Macro-economic policy still has a vital purpose: to set the conditions for stable growth and avoid boom and bust. But social democrats must recognize that getting the macro-economics right is not sufficient to stimulate higher growth and more jobs. Changes in interest rates →

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or tax policy will not lead to increased investment and employment unless the supply side of the economy is adaptable enough to respond. To make the European economy more dynamic, we also need to make it more flexible.

- Companies must have room for maneuver to take advantage of improved economic conditions and seize new opportunities: they must not be gagged by rules and regulations.
- Product, capital, and labor markets must all be flexible: we must not combine rigidity in one part of the economic system with openness and dynamism in the rest.

Here's an admission that lowering taxes and interest rates won't necessarily lead to more investments and jobs. All good things depend instead on "flexibility." Yet nowhere are the specifics of flexibility described (temporary and part-time contracts, different wages for the same work, greater ease for employers to fire and lay off workers, fewer regulations for health and safety), let alone analyzed. Although Americans have long put up with these conditions, they're controversial in Europe where the labor movement had won (in many places) more security. Isn't it rather deceptive to slide over the meaning of a concept that's so crucial in this document?

Adaptability and flexibility are at an increasing premium in the knowledge-based service economy of the future

Our economies are in transition—from industrial production to the knowledge-based service economy of the future. Social democrats must seize the opportunity of this radical economic change. It offers Europe a chance to catch up with the United States. It offers millions of our people the chance to find new jobs, learn new skills, pursue new careers, set up and expand new businesses—in summary, to realize their hopes of a better future.

But social democrats have to recognize that the basic requirements for economic success have changed. Services cannot be kept in stock: customers use them as and when they are needed—at many different times of day, outside what people think of as normal working hours. The rapid advance of the information age, especially the huge potential of electronic commerce, promises to change radically the way we shop, the way we learn, the way we communicate and the way we relax. Rigidity and over-regulation hamper our success in the knowledge-based service economy of the future. They will hold back the potential of innovation to generate new growth and more jobs. We need to become more flexible, not less.

An active government, in a newly conceived role, has a key role to play in economic development

Modern social democrats are not laissez-faire neoliberals. Flexible markets must be

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combined with a newly defined role for an active state. The top priority must be investment in human and social capital.

If high employment is to be achieved and sustained, employees must react to shifting demands. Our economies suffer from a considerable discrepancy between the number of job vacancies that need to be filled (for example in the field of information and communication technology) and the number of suitably qualified applicants.

That means education must not be a "one-off" opportunity: lifetime access to education and training and lifelong utilization of their opportunities represent the most important security available in the modern world. Therefore, governments have a responsibility to put in place a framework that enables individuals to enhance their qualifications and to fulfill their potential. This must now be a top social democratic priority.

- Standards at all levels of schooling and for all abilities of pupils must be raised. Where there are problems of literacy and numeracy these must be addressed, otherwise we condemn unskilled individuals to lives of low pay, insecurity, and unemployment.
- We want all young people to have the opportunity to gain entry into the world of work by means of qualified vocational training. Together with local employers, trade unions, and others, we must ensure that sufficient education and training opportunities are available to meet the requirements of the local labor market. In Germany, the political sector is supporting this endeavor with an immediate action program for jobs and training that will enable 100,000 young people to find a new job or training place or to obtain qualifications. In Britain the Welfare to Work program has already enabled 95,000 young people to find work.
- We need to reform post-school education and raise its quality, at the same time modernizing education and training programs so as to promote adaptability and employability in later life. Government has a particular role in providing incentives for individuals to save in order to meet the costs of lifelong learning—and in widening access through the promotion of distance learning.
- We should ensure that training plays a sig-

While "classic" Swedish social democracy emphasized investment in human and social capital (with education and labor market policies), it emphasized equally helping people during the most vulnerable phases of the life cycle (infancy, old age, illness, parenting newborns). The Third Way seems to want to cut back on the latter part because it doesn't add as directly to market efficiency and competitiveness.

How realistic is this in societies that devalue the "not young" but can also hire younger workers for less money (flexible wages)?

This is a basic goal for any democracy. But Third Way-ers must discuss the high price tag openly. To educate everyone well is a worthy and huge investment.

What happened to the much vaunted German apprentice system?

"Welfare to Work" is good as long as those working earn a living wage and have access to child care, health care, and transportation. Is this true for the 95,000 in Britain? Are their jobs temporary? If so, what's next for them?

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nificant role in our active labor market policies for the unemployed and workless households.

A modern and efficient public infrastructure, including a strong scientific base is also an essential feature of a job-generating economy. It is important to ensure that the composition of public expenditure is being directed at activities most beneficial to growth and fostering necessary structural change.

Modern social democrats should be champions of small- and medium-sized enterprise

The development of prosperous small- and medium-sized businesses has to be a top priority for modern social democrats. Here lies the biggest potential for new growth and jobs in the knowledge-based society of the future.

People in many different walks of life are looking for the opportunity to become entrepreneurs—long-standing as well as newly self-employed people, lawyers, computer experts, medical doctors, craftsmen, business consultants, people active in culture and sport. These individuals must have scope to develop economic initiative and create new business ideas. They must be encouraged to take risks. The burdens on them must be lightened. Their markets and their ambitions must not be hindered by borders.

- Europe's capital markets should be opened up so that growing firms and entrepreneurs can have ready access to finance. We intend to work together to ensure that growing high-tech firms enjoy the same access to the capital markets as their U.S. rivals.
- We should make it easy for individuals to set up businesses and for new companies to grow by lightening administrative burdens, exempting small businesses from onerous regulations and widening access to finance. We should make it easier for small businesses in particular to take on new staff: that means lowering the burden of regulation and non-wage labor costs.
- The links between business and the science base should be strengthened to ensure more entrepreneurial "spin-offs" from research and the promotion of "clusters" of new high-tech industries.

Sound public finance should be a badge

For the umpteenth time, where are the jobs? The Third Way answer: lower taxes and deregulate the labor market. Sounds like Thatcherism...

Why? Because they feel completely insecure in regular jobs? Because they can't find a good job?

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Balenced budgets were a point of pride for the Swedish Social Democrats. The non-Soc. Dem.s (center and conservative parties) ran up the first significant deficits during their time in office (1976-82) in Sweden.

of pride for social democrats

In the past, social democrats have all too often been associated with the view that the best way to promote employment and growth is to increase government borrowing in order to finance higher government spending. We do not rule out government deficits—during a cyclical downturn it makes sense to let the automatic stabilizers work. And borrowing to finance higher government investment, in strict accordance with the Golden Rule, can play a key role in strengthening the supply side of the economy.

"Golden Rule"??? Is the meaning of this supposed to be self-evident?

However, deficit spending cannot be used to overcome structural weaknesses in the economy that are a barrier to faster growth and higher employment. Social democrats also must not tolerate excessive levels of public sector debt. Increased indebtedness represents an unfair burden on future generations. It could have unwelcome redistributive effects. Above all, money spent on servicing high public sector debt is not available to be spent on other priorities, including increased investment in education, training, or the transport infrastructure.

What if governments (like corporations) set up separate budgets for capital investment? Deficits there would be fine because a return on productive investment is expected. Robert Heilbroner wrote about this in the 1980s.

From the standpoint of a supply-side policy of the left, it is essential that high levels of government borrowing decrease and not increase.

IV. An Active Labor Market Policy for the Left

The Swedes "wrote the book" on this decades ago. From that point of view, active labor market policy is "classic" social democracy.

The state must become an active agent for employment, not merely the passive recipient of the casualties of economic failure.

People who have never had experience of work or who have been out of work for long periods lose the skills necessary to compete in the labor market. Prolonged unemployment also damages individual life chances in other ways and makes it more difficult for individuals to participate fully in society.

A welfare system that puts limits on an individual's ability to find a job must be reformed.

Modern social democrats want to transform the safety net of entitlements into a springboard to personal responsibility.

For our societies, the imperatives of social justice are more than the distribution of cash transfers. Our objective is the widening of

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equality of opportunity, regardless of race, age, or disability, to fight social exclusion and ensure equality between men and women.

People rightly demand high-quality public services and solidarity for all who need help—but also fairness toward those who pay for it. All social policy instruments must improve life chances, encourage self-help, and promote personal responsibility.

With this aim in mind, the health care system and the system for ensuring financial security in old age are being thoroughly modernized in Germany by adapting both to the changes in life expectancy and changing lifelong patterns of employment, without sacrificing the principle of solidarity. The same thinking applies to the introduction of stakeholder pensions and the reform of disability benefits in Britain.

Periods of unemployment in an economy without jobs for life must become an opportunity to attain qualifications and foster personal development. Part-time work and low-paid work are better than no work because they ease the transition from unemployment to jobs.

New policies to offer unemployed people jobs and training are a social democratic priority—but we also expect everyone to take up the opportunity offered.

But providing people with the skills and abilities to enter the workforce is not enough. The tax and benefits systems need to make sure it is in people's interests to work. A streamlined and modernized tax and benefits system is a significant component of the left's active supply-side labor market policy. We must:

- Make work pay for individuals and families. The biggest part of the income must remain in the pockets of those who worked for it.
- Encourage employers to offer "entry" jobs to the labor market by lowering the burden of tax and social security contributions on low-paid jobs. We must explore the scope to lower the burden of non-wage labor costs by environmental taxes.
- Introduce targeted programs for the long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged groups to give them the opportunity to reintegrate into the labor market on the principle of rights and responsibilities going together.
- Assess all benefit recipients, including people

Taken seriously, all these social policy instruments require significant tax money. But Third Way-ers assume they can lower taxes, get more economic growth, and then collect more tax revenues. It's David Stockman and voodoo economics all over again.

How is this being done specifically? And why have people protested against the reforms?

How does a person live during the transition? Does the government provide a supplement to guarantee a decent minimum?

Did taxes really keep lower-paid workers out of the labor force? Many earned too little to pay taxes. Or is "keep what you earn" a slogan for lowering taxes for upper income people?

When tried in Italy, this policy often yielded only temporary and low-paying jobs.

Huh?

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Is all this "send them to work" helpful for those economies whose main problems are a chronic shortage of good jobs and sluggish job creation?

of working age in the receipt of disability benefits, for their potential to earn, and reform state employment services to assist those capable of work to find appropriate work.

• Support enterprise and setting up one's own business as a viable route out of unemployment. Such decisions contain considerable risks for those who dare to make such a step. We must support those people by managing these risks.

The left's supply-side agenda will hasten structural change. But it will also make that change easier to live with and manage.

Adapting to change is never easy and the speed of change appears faster than ever before, not least under the impact of new technologies. Change inevitably destroys some jobs, but it creates others.

However, there can be lags between job losses in one sector and the creation of new jobs elsewhere. Whatever the longer-term benefits for economies and living standards, particular industries and communities can experience the costs before the gains. Hence we must focus our efforts on easing localized problems of transition. The dislocating effects of change will be greater the longer they are resisted, but it is no good pretending that they can be wished away.

I interpret this to mean that the government should eliminate any obstacles that prevent workers downsized in one industry from taking low-wage jobs elsewhere. Why does this in itself lead to anything better? What problem have we solved?

Adjustment will be the easier, the more labor and product markets are working properly. Barriers to employment in relatively low productivity sectors need to be lowered if employees displaced by the productivity gains that are an inherent feature of structural change are to find jobs elsewhere. The labor market needs a low-wage sector in order to make low-skill jobs available. The tax and benefits system can replenish low incomes from employment and at the same time save on support payments for the unemployed.

This is a truly bizarre and wrongheaded claim with which to end the policy section of a social democratic manifesto. Good grief — is this where the Third Way wants to take social democracy?

V. Political Benchmarking in Europe

The challenge is the definition and implementation of a new social democratic politics in Europe. We do not advocate a single European model, still less the transformation of the European Union into a superstate. We are pro-Europe and pro-reform in Europe. People will support further steps towards integration where there is real value-added and they can be

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clearly justified—such as action to combat crime and destruction of the environment as well as the promotion of common goals in social and employment policy. But at the same time Europe urgently needs reform—more efficient and transparent institutions, reform of outdated policies, and decisive action against waste and fraud.

We are presenting our ideas as an outline, not a finalized program. The politics of the New Center and the Third Way is already a reality in many city councils, in reformed national policies, in European cooperation and in new international initiatives.

To this end the German and British governments have decided to embed their existing arrangements for exchanging views on policy development in a broader approach. We propose to do this in three ways:

- First, there will be a series of ministerial meetings, supported by frequent contacts among their close staff.
- We will seek discussion with political leaders in other European countries who wish to take forward with us modernizing ideas for social democracy in their respective national contexts. We will start on this now.
- We will establish a network of experts, farsighted thinkers, political fora, and discussion meetings. We will thereby deepen and continually further develop the concept of the New Center and the Third Way. This is the priority for us.

The aim of this declaration is to give impetus to modernization. We invite all social democrats in Europe not to let this historic opportunity for renewal pass by. The diversity of our ideas is our greatest asset for the future. Our societies expect us to knit together our diverse experiences in a new coherent program.

Let us together build social democracy's success for the new century. Let the politics of the Third Way and the *Neue Mitte* be Europe's new hope. ●

New Democrats in the U.S.A. tried for years to lose the "liberal" label while shifting the party's politics rightward. The British and German Third Way-ers still embrace the term "social democracy" while making the same shift. I'm not sure if this language choice will be positive or negative for the left in the long run, but it's mildly noteworthy in an otherwise vacuous and uninspiring document.

JOANNE BARKAN is a New York-based writer.

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WTO 101: Myths About the World Trade Organization

Jackie Smith and Timothy Patrick Moran

Before November 1999, few Americans knew what "WTO" meant, much less understood its workings. The World Trade Organization evolved from the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and was officially created in 1995. Membership has now reached 135 nations and another 32 have applied for accession, including China and the former Soviet Republics. Current members span the spectrum of the world economy, from the poorest (Sierra Leone at per capita GNP of around $140 in 1998) to the wealthiest (Switzerland at $40,080), from the largest democracy on earth (India) to the smallest dictatorship (Cuba).

The initial concern was tariff reduction. But lately the system has expanded to include governments' uses of "non-tariff barriers to trade," including anti-dumping measures, environmental and safety regulations, humanitarian sanctions against a country's products, and restrictions on foreign investment. What distinguishes the WTO among international agreements is its Dispute Resolution Panel. The panel possesses far-reaching sanctioning powers over member countries, which it uses to ensure compliance with WTO commitments. No other international body has such strong enforcement capabilities.

The Seattle meetings were intended to produce an agenda for a new "Millennial Round" of negotiations. The aim was to expand the WTO's mandate to cover a wider range of goods and services, including financial investments, education, and health care. The protests successfully derailed (at least temporarily) the next round, and the WTO and its supporters have been practicing serious spin control ever since. In the United States, trade officials now talk of "educating constituents" on the benefits of free trade. Within a week of the Seattle meetings, the WTO completely overhauled its Web site, incorporating a new "global town hall" and Letterman-like "Top 10 Lists" extolling the "benefits" and de-fogging the "common misunderstandings" of the WTO. The twin themes being advanced by the newly image-conscious WTO are global economic successes, combined with assurances of newfound transparency. The Seattle events pushed open the closed doors of global trade negotiations. For the first time, people around the world have the chance to become better informed about WTO-style globalization, and to demand more democratic participation and accountability in future negotiations.

In what follows, we look critically at some of the claims and assumptions made by the WTO and its supporters, ideas presented by the WTO as accepted knowledge, when, in fact, deep polemics surround these issues. For many of these claims, the best evidence is contradictory; for others, it's simply nonexistent. We consider them as six key myths of the multilateral trading system.

Myth #1: It's About Free Trade

One of the greatest economic illusions, proclaimed since Adam Smith, is that capitalism works best (that is, profits are highest) when markets are free and fair. Indeed, the WTO proudly proclaims that the central purpose of the multilateral trading system is to ensure that "trade flows as smoothly, predictably, and as freely as possible." In the real world, though, competition is not conducive to profit, and capitalists (and the governments representing them) know this. Countries and their corporations (especially the rich and powerful of each) do not want to liberalize markets so much as selectively protect them. In practice, the WTO and its member countries adhere to a policy of lopsided

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liberalization easily infringing on the ideology of openness to protect their markets or their products. The game is called "free trade." But the winners are those who can conceal (or create) monopoly price situations, maintain comparative advantages, and deflect competitive pressures. This is why "strategic trade policy" and "free trade policy" are largely synonyms—everyone knows the latter exists only in theory. This finicky relationship the WTO and its members have with trade liberalization has come under increasing scrutiny, particularly as trade critics have exposed the implications of the agreements for particular industries and countries. Critics of the 1994 Uruguay Round argue that many of those agreements liberalized trade only when that was in the interest of Industrialized Countries (ICs). Sectors important to the Southern Countries (SCs) remained selectively more protected, especially with regard to agricultural products and other commodities.

More blatant corporate protectionism is evidenced in efforts of the ICs to regulate trade related to intellectual property rights, or TRIPs. TRIPs protect holders of recognized copyrights and patents, allowing them to reap economic rewards for intellectual property in all member countries. WTO members are required to standardize their patent laws "upward" to ensure that patent holders can recoup their investments in research and development (even if such R&D involves collecting and patenting plant specimens indigenous to developing countries). Patent holders are guaranteed a minimum of a twenty-year monopoly on the marketing of their product. Is this free trade? Hardly. In practice, the corporate monopolies protected by TRIPs have, for example, undermined South Africa's efforts to make low-cost AIDS medications available to its people. Thus on behalf of its powerful pharmaceutical industry, the United States has challenged South Africa's Medicines Law, which promotes the importation and licensing of lower-priced generic versions of these and other life-saving drugs. In short, the "liberalization" promoted under the WTO is highly skewed to the advantage of the ICs and the transnational corporations based in these countries.

WTO rules run interference for multinational corporations against the potential obstacles of national and local laws and competition. Inequities inherent in the WTO's regulation of North-South trade are readily apparent in the organization's dense and convoluted rules and procedures. Indeed, if it's just about free trade, why did it take so many years to negotiate the rules of the system, and a more than nine-hundred-page treaty to define it?

Myth #2: It Promotes Equitable Access to a Rule-based Trading System

Many developing countries have looked to the WTO to facilitate greater access to IC markets, since the system (in theory) prohibits unfair restrictions on trade, such as high tariffs or quotas. In practice, WTO rules have allowed ICs to restrict imports from developing countries while they force the latter to accept market liberalization rules that primarily benefit Western corporations. WTO rules, for instance, restrict tariffs on manufactured goods, but they allow higher tariffs on many commodities that developing countries export. So the U.S. tariff on orange juice is 31 percent, while the average for industrial tariffs is below 5 percent. ICs have also maintained quotas on imports of developing country products such as textiles and clothing. In addition, the WTO Agreement on Agriculture instructs ICs to merely reduce their historically heavy agricultural subsidies by 20 percent. At the same time, developing countries that largely lack such subsidies are prohibited from establishing them. As a result, unprotected farmers in the South are forced to sell their goods in "free markets" where prices are distorted by dominant, heavily subsidized Western agricultural firms.

The Dispute Settlement Process within the WTO gives it the strongest enforcement capacity of all international organizations. Unlike many agreements in the United Nations, WTO provisions are binding on governments, and states that fail to bring their national laws into compliance with WTO provisions face a wide range of trade sanctions. In theory, any member state can bring a dispute to the WTO, but in reality the vast majority of challenges have come from wealthy nations. The United States alone initiated more than 50 of the 117 challenges brought by late 1999. Defendants in WTO disputes, moreover, must face a panel of

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trade bureaucrats and corporate lawyers who are assigned without regard to potential conflicts of interest and who deliberate in secret. Unlike judicial systems in most democratic institutions, access to evidence on the case is strictly limited, and amicus briefs from stakeholders are only allowed at the discretion of government parties to the case. Limited in their ability to maintain vigilant teams of skilled legal advisors, poor countries typically abandon laws that might be considered WTO-illegal rather than risk costly legal battles.

Myth #3: It's Democratic

> "When I see [the WTO] being told it's undemocratic, I think of the ambassador of India, the greatest democracy on earth. I think of small island states that have to form governments for a few thousand people. This is their institution. It's as democratic as it gets." (Michael Moore, director-general of the WTO, September 1999)

In theory, the WTO was to promote greater democracy and transparency in global trade negotiations by allowing each member country a single vote in contrast to the financially weighted voting systems used in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In practice, however, there is little evidence of democracy within the WTO operations. The United States, the European Union (EU), Canada, and Japan (dubbed "the Quad") have routinely hammered out agreements in informal, "green room" meetings, named after the site of these secret conferences at the WTO's Geneva headquarters. The Quad then uses its considerable economic and political influence to build "consensus" around these decisions made without participation from the full WTO membership.

In the course of talks in Seattle, representatives from developing countries grumbled about the lack of democracy in the WTO negotiating process, which contributed to the breakdown of negotiations. Even if one accepts the 135 governments in the WTO as legitimate representatives of the people within their borders, can we then assume that the trade policies pursued by most governments are products of democratic participation and deliberation? Even in established democracies, there is little role for public debate about international trade.

In the United States, "iron-triangle" politics has meant that industry trade groups enjoy direct and often uncontested access to trade officials. More than five hundred corporation and business representatives were given official credentials as "trade advisors" to the U.S. delegation in Seattle. In contrast, environmental advocates had to sue the federal government to enforce a U.S. law requiring that all stakeholders be represented on federal advisory panels.

And how is this for democracy? The much discussed 1999 "banana war" between the EU and the United States (not one banana grown for export between them) was brought to the WTO almost single-handedly by Carl Linder, top man at the world's largest banana distributor, Chiquita. A big donor to both political parties, according to the *Economist*, he "lobbied the Clinton administration assiduously" to stop the EU's practice of favoring bananas from ex- colonies in the Caribbean, effectively assuring monopoly rights for his company in Europe.

But maybe we're dealing with a fundamental misunderstanding about what democracy actually is. In a *Financial Times* interview, Moore registered his irritation with the fact that NGOs (nongovernmental organizations), which "never [sell] a product, never [get] a vote and [don't] actually do anything can come out and attack [the WTO for being undemocratic]." Apparently, unelected, nonprofit, do- nothing advocacy groups have no role in the democracy defined by the WTO's new world order.

Myth #4: It's Good for the World's Poor

> The longer we delay launching the [next round of] negotiations, the more the poorest among us lose." (Michael Moore, December 1999)

The WTO claims to "help the poor" on two levels. On the international level, trade is supposed to spur economic growth (thus helping poor nations). On the national level, it is alleged that trade raises incomes and cuts living costs (thus helping poor people). But among specialists, connections between trade liberalization, economic growth, and poverty reduction are much more hotly disputed than free-trade advocates would have us believe. Wide and growing disparities in economic growth rates and the distribution of income among nations have caused

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many analysts to become skeptical of the links between import liberalization and economic performance. At the very least, the WTO's simple assumption that openness is superior to any alternative is hasty, if not wrong. After all, a country's wealth depends much less on ease of trade then it does on what is actually traded. The idea is not merely to be integrated into global commodity chains; it is to extract profit from your particular location in them.

Then there's the question of trade's relationship to poverty reduction. In many ICs global trade is certainly raising incomes, but mostly at the top, generating unprecedented polarization. As the returns to skill and education continue to increase, and high-wage manufacturing jobs shift to the South, countries like the United States and Great Britain are becoming bipolar societies with respect to work and wages. Across the developed world, and especially in Latin America, persistent poverty remains an intractable problem. Despite the rush of poor countries to radically open their economies, it's far from clear that their poor citizens will benefit. Some commentators would go farther. In a recent editorial in *World Development*, Michael Lipton concludes, "there is strong evidence for the consensus view that [the fate of a] country's poor is not systematically affected by either its growth rate or its pace of liberalization." In other words, the assumed links between liberalization, distribution, and growth may exist for particular countries in particular times. But to presume that these relationships hold universally represents a giant leap of faith in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary.

Myth #5: Labor and Environmental "Side Agreements" Can Solve the Current Crisis

Bill Clinton's response to protests against the WTO both before and during the Seattle meeting has been to push for a labor working group within the framework of the WTO. Although this strategy might appease big labor at home, it is unlikely to bear any fruit in multilateral negotiations given resistance from the majority of developing country members who claim that their "comparative advantage" is in cheap labor. Even advocates of labor rights and the environment should oppose the "side-agreement" approach to "fixing" the WTO. It would bring new

Finishing the Thought

On April 17, 1965, the first major demonstration against the war in Vietnam took place in Washington, D.C. Though the program included such celebrities as Joan Baez, Bob Moses, and I.F. Stone, the best-remembered speech came form Students for a Democratic Society president Paul Potter: "The incredible war in Vietnam has provided the razor, the terrifying sharp cutting edge that has finally severed the last vestige of illusion that morality and democracy are the guiding principles of American foreign policy . . . . What kind of system is it that justifies the United States or any country seizing the destinies of the Vietnamese people? . . . What kind of system . . . consistently puts material values before human values? . . . We must name that system. We must name it, describe it, analyze it, understand it and change it." But Potter himself never did name that system.

On November 30, 1999, in Seattle, Washington, at the first major national demonstration against corporate-controlled globalization, Gerald McEntee, the president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees—best-known for his unbridled enthusiasm for Bill Clinton and Albert Gore—told twenty thousand protestors, "The system turns everything into a commodity. A rain forest in Brazil, a library in Philadelphia, a hospital in Alberta! We have to name that system: it is corporate capitalism!"

Long pause, strange times, changing weather.

—Joshua B. Freeman

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issues under the same fundamentally flawed and yet powerful Dispute Settlement Process and further reinforce the power of rich countries over poor ones. A more productive approach to promoting labor rights and environmental protection would be to make global trade law subordinate to the United Nations and the International Labor Organization. That way, already established international human rights and environmental agreements could not be "trumped" by WTO rules.

Myth #6: There Is No Alternative

As the above discussion shows, the definition of "free trade" promoted by the WTO consists of selective protection of ICs' special interests—like Florida orange growers and large pharmaceutical companies—coupled with a radical and quick opening of developing economies to global markets. What makes this so inevitable? As the Seattle protest took shape, and it became clear that the ceremonial unveiling of an enlarged WTO mandate was far from a done deal, the *Economist* was forced to admit that "globalization is not irreversible." It's clearly not inevitable, either. The success of Seattle protests in derailing negotiations to expand the WTO generated hope that the "end of history" might have to be delayed. The protests created new political space for citizens to expand their economic literacy and demand a voice in decisions regarding the alternatives for the future of economic development.

It is vitally important that we expand that space. Contrary to WTO and U.S. Trade Representative propaganda, these issues are far from resolved.

Our job on the left is to project a critique of WTO-style trade liberalization and economic liberalization more broadly. We need to incorporate these issues into research agendas, classroom curricula, and popular discourse. Efforts to construct a world based on social justice and ecological sustainability depend on democratic participation. Cultivating the public awareness and civic skills for such democratic participation is a fundamental challenge for the left at the beginning of the twenty-first century. ●

JACKIE SMITH and TIMOTHY PATRICK MORAN are assistant professors of sociology at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Smith is a co-editor of *Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity Beyond the State*.

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Prison Labor

Liza Featherstone

AMERICAN LABOR LEADERS are threatened with death and prevented from talking to each other or to other workers. This sounds like a lurid tale from the turn of the last century, but it is happening today. The leaders and workers in question are prison inmates. U.S. prisoners who have attempted to organize unions among their fellow inmate workers have found this country's correctional system about as labor-friendly as Indonesia, and they have few outside advocates.

Jerome White-Bey, the founder of the Missouri Prisoners Labor Union (MPLU), recently organized his fellow inmates to file 1,383 grievances in a single week. Silent, peaceful strikes are frequent in the Missouri system, where prisoners make shoes, clothing, furniture, soap, mattresses, metals, computers, and fish hooks, for both private companies and state-operated factories. Labor is obligatory, and pay is well below minimum wage. So far the strike actions merely annoy corrections administrators, but they do suggest an unusual degree of inmate solidarity.

The Missouri Department of Corrections has refused to recognize the MPLU (no surprise; the 1977 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Jones v. North Carolina* denied any constitutional protection to prison workers' organizations). More disturbingly, they have placed White-Bey in administrative segregation—known to inmates as "Ad Seg" or "The Hole," also known as solitary confinement—since last spring for "disobedience." Though he isn't suicidal, he has at times been placed on suicide watch so his every move can be filmed. White-Bey is constantly being transferred from one prison to another (he was transferred three times in 1999), presumably to make it even more difficult for him to network with other prisoners. Other MPLU leaders have received similar treatment. (In a letter to a White-Bey supporter, the Missouri Department of Corrections stated that it did not oppose a prisoners' union per se, but that the MPLU members were encouraging disobedience, and were the "most violent prisoners in the system.")

The MPLU, whatever its flaws or merits, is not alone. A few prisoners in Rosharon, Texas, have formed the Texas Prisoners Labor Union, whose executive director, Willie A. Milton, has been placed in adminstrative segregation several times. He says he has been confined for his political activities, and that his personal belongings, including union literature, have been repeatedly confiscated. (A Texas Department of Corrections spokesman could not comment on the reasons for Milton's confinement.) In Mississippi—where, as in Texas, prisoners are forced to work full time without any compensation—a prisoner named Victor Hurns is attempting to form a union that would demand that prisoners be paid minimum wage for all private-sector work, and at least $140 per month for all other labor. Since Hurns has been in a maximum security single cell—in a unit specially designed, says Mississippi Department of Corrections spokesperson Winn McInnis, for "the worst of the worst"—since 1995, his networking opportunities, like those of Milton and White-Bey, are limited. Asked if Hurns is being held in maximum security for his union activities, McInnis says he doesn't know, but "sure, if he's conspiring anything, they'll take him away."

Incarceration has emerged not only as a public safety matter, not only as a desperate indicator of race and class inequity in America, but as an urgent labor issue. We should be clear about what this means: Some left critics of the

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practice have exaggerated the notion that prison work programs are profitable and that, as in the Old South, industry's needs for cheap labor are driving sentencing policy. As Christian Parenti points out in his new book on the prison industry, *Lockdown America*, most inmates still aren't working, and most correctional industries programs lose money. Only about 80,000 U.S. inmates, out of 1.8 million, currently work for private companies.

But there are strong pressures to expand the pool. The prison population has tripled over the past two decades, placing a great burden on taxpayers; in this context, the demand that inmates "earn their keep" has a certain popular resonance. The expansion of the private prison industry has also created a climate in which prisons seek not only to save money, but also to profit. In addition, hysteria over crime has led to short-sighted, politically driven prison policies that emphasize punishment over rehabilitation. Thus when budgets are tight, work programs have survived, while many programs of greater proven rehabilitative value, like drug treatment or education, have vanished.

Over the past twenty years, more than thirty states have enacted laws permitting the use of inmate labor for private industry. In recent years, Oregon, Texas, Mississippi, and several other states have passed laws requiring prisoners to work. Nine states, including Alabama and Arizona, have brought back chain gangs. And at the federal level, a controversial attempt to expand the Federal Prison Industries program—which, with some 18,000 participants, is already the largest single employer of convicts—is now underway.

Given the likelihood of prison industries' expansion and the deeply exploitative nature of prison work, it might make sense for the AFL-CIO and its members to turn more attention toward prisons. Few workers in America are more in need of workplace justice. But there are numerous barriers. For one thing, most prisoner activists don't completely oppose prison labor; having nothing to do all day adds to the violence and inhumanity of prison life, and many wouldn't mind making money to send to their families, or developing some job skills to prepare them for life outside. Most "civilian" unions, by contrast, oppose the entire notion of prison labor as a threat to the jobs of law-abiding people.

PRISON LABOR was prevalent in the United States throughout the nineteenth century. In the post–Civil War South, emerging industries like mining and railroads depended on inmate workers. In the late nineteenth century, organized labor provided the first serious challenges to the convict labor system. The Coal Creek Rebellion of 1891 started when the Tennessee Coal Company in Briceville, Tennessee, locked out its coal miners for refusing to sign a contract barring them from union membership and replaced them with leased convicts. The miners stormed the stockades, freed the convicts, and burned down the prison, forcing management to stop using inmate labor and to give the miners their jobs back. (It was around this time that businesses hiring free people also began raising objections to prison labor; they didn't like having to compete with industries using low-cost convict labor.)

In the 1930s, pressure from labor and industry, combined with the political imperatives of unacceptably high unemployment, brought about tighter federal regulation of interstate transport and sale of prison-made goods. This sharply curbed the practice, though the famously brutal chain gangs of the South weren't abolished until the 1950s. Then, in the 1970s, a dramatic rise in the prison population, combined with major prison riots, inspired an attempt to revive prison industries. Again, organized labor played a major part in their regulation. In 1979, the federal government passed the Prison Industries Enhancement Act (PIE), establishing the PIE program, which exempts state prisons from the federal ban on selling prison-made goods in interstate markets, provided they pay "prevailing wages," consult with local unions, and do not take jobs from free workers (The PIE program is cited as a model of humane and labor-friendly prison labor even by many prisoners' advocates, though the "prevailing wage" is a bit of a myth. As Parenti points out, the state deducts 80 percent of the wages for room and board, so inmates end up getting between 65 cents and $1.50 an hour).

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Today, unions are leading the resistance to federal and state efforts to expand the use of prison labor. The main reason that organized labor opposes inmate labor is that it can take away jobs from unionized workers, and depress the wages of free workers through competition with the companies that hire them. (Sometimes prisoners have even been used as scabs during strikes, most infamously by Trans-World Airlines in the mid-1980s.)

In 1994, Oregon voters approved an amendment to the state's constitution requiring all inmates to work more than forty hours a week (next year, voters will have an opportunity to rescind the measure). "Now if you call Oregon DMV," says Mary Botkin, political coordinator for the Oregon American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers, which led the unsuccessful battle against the 1994 amendment, "you're talking to an inmate." Botkin says her union, along with the Teamsters and the Building Trades, campaigned against the measure, but "we didn't put money into it." (She isn't optimistic that next year will play out any differently.) Botkin served as one of two labor representatives on the state Prison Industries Board, the governing body that administered the work program; she says it was a constant struggle to make sure the inmates wouldn't be taking jobs from free workers. The board approved the "Prison Blues" program, in which prisoners work in a blue jean factory, because, Botkin explains, "there are no other blue jean factories left in the Pacific Northwest. They've all moved overseas." But authorities wearied of the labor representatives' objections to other inmate work assignments and eventually removed them from the board.

Oregon's is just one of many regional struggles over prison labor. Unions in Washington State are currently struggling to prevent correctional industries from displacing workers. In some places, the unions have been successful. In Ohio, in 1992, the United Auto Workers managed to stop Honda from replacing union workers with inmates; in 1994, unions stopped Toys 'R Us in Chicago from doing the same.

At the federal level, labor and industry were recently united in their opposition to HR 2558, a bill drafted by Representative Bill McCollum that, if passed, would have lifted the ban on interstate traffic in prison-made goods. Less aggressively, the same coalition—the Prison Industries Reform Alliance—that worked to defeat the McCollum bill also lobbied to pass legislation sponsored by Repsentatives Pete Hoekstra and Barney Frank that would have curbed the expansion of the Federal Prison Industries program. (Businesses, especially small businesses, tend to oppose expansion of the program because of their usual anxieties about unfair competition.) Both McCollum's and Hoekstra's bills languished in committee, and it is unclear whether either will be resurrected this year.

Since the AFL-CIO represents corrections and police officers, the union and its affiliates are careful not to completely oppose prison labor (guards tend to support prison work programs, because working inmates are often better-behaved). But for decades, the organization has consistently opposed the expansion of federal prison industries. Jay Power, legislative director of the national AFL-CIO (interviewed before the McCollum bill died), explained why the union flatly opposed it: "It takes away jobs from people who are not convicts." Power was not oblivious to the conservative implications of finding yet another way to paint inmates as a threat to law-abiding folks; he relished them. He anticipated that in a floor fight there would be Republicans "who would turn on McCollum like rabid dogs. It would be a glorious fight to fight." Asked about the AFL-CIO's view of prisoners' unions, Power says he isn't aware of any AFL-CIO affiliate or any other union engaged in organizing inmates. He laughs. "We're happy to get members where we can, but—I don't anticipate that's an area we'd be getting into. We're not going to be organizing convicts."

PETER KALBERER, an Albuquerque member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), who has been active on White-Bey's behalf, compares mainstream unions' rhetoric on prison labor to that of the pre–Civil War Free Soil movement, many of whom were "against slavery but against slaves, too." A Michigan prisoner, Ali Khalid Abdullah, recently wrote

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an impassioned letter to Kalberer urging the fragmentary anarchist union to support his and other fledgling prisoners' unions, citing the difficulty of organizing prisoners with "no outside support." So far the IWW is the only outside union that has given any active, ongoing support to prisoners' labor organizing. And the IWW is so small, decentralized, and lacking in resources or coordination that to call it a "union" would, generally speaking, be an optimistic exaggeration. (At best, IWW members have been able to help prison labor activists publicize their causes, to a very limited degree.)

Mainstream unions' caution about these issues is understandable. No prison administration is likely to voluntarily recognize prisoners' organizations, so, given the constraints posed by *Jones v. North Carolina*, a serious prison organizing effort would require a staggering commitment of resources. Labor's organizing capacity is already stretched thin.

Another concern is that unionizing prisoners might legitimize prison labor, which, even if reformed, would always be a fundamentally undemocratic practice. If the McCollum bill had passed, asked Ann Hoffman, legislative director for the garment and textile workers' union (UNITE), wouldn't the United States be "doing exactly what we criticize China for doing?" Other labor spokespeople echo this criticism. (The United States bans the import of prison-made goods and has condemned China's continued use of inmate labor.) Even when prisoners are properly compensated, conditions are relatively comfortable, and work voluntary, one can argue that prison is an inherently coercive environment, and that any work exacted from people who have so little control over their lives is a form of slavery. And you don't have to endorse unions' protectionism, or their absolutism on the issue, to agree that so far, education might prove to be of more long-term rehabilitative value for prisoners than unskilled labor.

But we might also ask whether there isn't a failure of imagination here. Consider the plight of workfare workers—another stigmatized group who must either be redefined as "workers" with rights or continue to work in near-slavery conditions. Until very recently, most unions' posture was simply to oppose workfare programs across the board, and not to make alliances of any sort with the workers themselves. Steve Williams, founder of the San Francisco welfare recipients' organization People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER) says just a few years ago, unions wouldn't consider organizing workfare workers. "They thought these people were unorganizable, too crazy." And just as fundamentally, unions believed the welfare recipients had no right to work at all because they were taking jobs from unionized workers. But workfare didn't go away, and neither did the new group of workers it spawned; now San Francisco unions work with welfare recipients through POWER, and similar alliances have been formed in New York and Philadelphia.

Unions will probably find that inmate laborers, too, are here to stay. And even if a full-fledged organizing effort is impossible, it seems short-sighted for unions to maintain no relationships at all with some of the poorest and most exploited workers in the nation.

A few unions have in fact found a strategy that may, for now, work better than either unionizing or demonizing inmates. Since 1978, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers has intermittently, depending on available funding, trained San Quentin inmates as apprentice electricians. This way, the union trains future members, and the inmates get a real skill (90 percent of the graduates of this program stay out of prison after their release; San Quentin's general inmate population has an 80 percent recidivism rate).

But for inmates who want to join unions, the future isn't promising. They continue to try: the MPLU's Jerome White-Bey has received mail from prisoners as far away as Georgia asking for advice on starting unions. Still, organizing, says Kalberer, "is a risky thing for prisoners. If they raise their voices they get thrown in the hole. I don't frankly know if it's feasible. They've got a lot against them and not much for them." ●

LIZA FEATHERSTONE is a freelance journalist based in Brooklyn, N.Y.

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Unions, Organizing, and Democracy

Living in One's Time, Building for the Future

Katherine Sciacchitano

THE BASTARDIZED curse "may you live in interesting times" has a special poignancy for any organizer living in uninteresting ones. An "interesting time," for better or worse, is one of upheaval—a period when large movements of ordinary people can create sweeping changes that would otherwise take decades. No organizer can create interesting times. Yet every organizer struggles to be prepared—and to prepare the way—for them.

This contradiction—having to live and organize without a movement yet struggling to prepare for one—is especially acute for labor organizers today. The revitalized American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) has set its sights on nothing short of movement building. Inspired by the militancy and industry-wide drives of the 1930s, the federation and its affiliates are pouring millions of dollars into rebuilding organizing capacity in workplaces and in communities. Yet underpinning labor's hope and vast investment of funds is the belief that the lowly staff organizer can not only make all this happen, but—since union density continues to fall and there is no time to waste—she or he can make it happen now: before the money runs out, before backlash sets in, before the forces of complacency reassert themselves.

But because making it happen now—which is usually equated with winning National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) elections—takes immense resources, certain tasks are postponed: developing rank-and-file leadership, member education, building the kind of enduring local union organizations that can give workers real power and change their lives. Organizers' primary responsibility runs less to the people they are organizing than to the campaign. Where winning is impossible, the union walks away to devote scarce resources to other efforts. Even successful campaigns may see resources shifted to other struggles—perhaps to key targets elsewhere in an industry—before fledgling local organizations can be consolidated.

The irony of this prevalent, though not universal, approach is the contradictions it creates for the deeply shared goal of movement building. Workers develop a healthy fear of abandonment. Organizers burn out. Maintaining the continuity and depth needed for building leadership and real capacity for social change becomes more, not less, difficult.

The problem is compounded by the fact that, despite changes in the economy that should by now have lifted all bets on the shape unions will take in the twenty-first century, most organizers are still sent into campaigns not only with a model of organizing that workers are asked to accept, but often with a predetermined strategy. The fact that so many organizers are still white and male, in addition to being outsiders with a plan, ensures that race, gender, and especially class hierarchies reassert themselves and block the full sharing of information and ideas needed for long-term success. As one senior organizer explained, "If we want workers to exercise power, we have to let them take it." Yet for the most part organizers don't give workers a voice in how they are organized. Organizing is shaped by what a small group of insiders know and impart, rather than by workers exercising power. We end up further from, not closer to, our goal of movement building.

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Lessons From the Thirties and the AFL-CIO

At a time of economic restructuring that rivals the 1920s and 1930s, and as the workforce is transformed by women, immigrants, and people of color, the ability of organized labor to rebuild itself depends more than ever on workers having a direct role in deciding what form unions should take, how to organize, and what the goal of union power in the twenty-first century should be. The Communications Workers of America (CWA)'s Alliance at IBM is just one example. In an attempt to organize this giant, CWA is focusing first on building a real workplace organization. According to Larry Cohen, executive vice president and director of organizing for CWA, everything else will be derived from that—whether or not there is collective bargaining and whether or not there are contracts will be up to the workers.

How can labor develop the capacity for this kind of creative organizing, not only at IBM, but at myriad employers across industries and among diverse workforces? How can it move beyond "hot shop" organizing—waiting passively for pockets of dissatisfaction and militancy to develop—and instead hone the capacity to organize the strategic industries and employers needed to build real power by developing and nurturing democratic leadership among the new workforce? How can it reforge the essential link between an active membership and movement building?

One step is to look at the last "interesting" period of organizing and ask how it happened. The lesson generally taken from the thirties is that the Great Depression created a huge and sudden upsurge of organizing, fueled by CIO militancy and funds. But the upsurge of organizing wasn't sudden, and it wasn't simply the product of the CIO. Union successes of the thirties and forties were preceded by years of party-based organizing and shopfloor struggles by workers. These efforts were often independent of both the AFL and the CIO, and sometimes went on for years without formal union recognition. Leaders and activists benefited from an independent worker education movement dating back to the 1920s. Disagreements over strategy and tactics were frequent, not only between the AFL and the CIO, but between the CIO and local organizing forces.

Beyond the workplace, women's clubs, community organizations, ethnic networks, and organizations of the unemployed all provided bases for overcoming gender, race, and ethnic divisions and building solidarity. Most important, changes in the political climate during the depression helped blunt the use of police power in strikes and led to positive social and labor legislation. In other words, the CIO didn't create the movement it came to lead. Rather, the CIO was successful because it marshaled its massive resources to support and give direction to, instead of trying to control and supplant, the many forces that were already in motion and fighting for workers' rights.

The civil rights movement—this century's other great movement of mass participation and disruption—also illustrates the role of historical learning in movement building. As Aldon Morris shows in *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, the mass base of support on which it depended was highly organized internally, the culmination of a long history of protest and community building beginning with nineteenth-century slave revolts. The successful use of civil disobedience, far from giving birth to the movement, followed from a long process of learning from the successes and failures of many organizations in many communities—organizations that were often in conflict. Black churches were key places where communities defined their needs and goals, nurtured networks of leaders responsive to these needs, and mobilized resources and developed tactics. Leaders—including the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.—functioned as effectively as they did because of this rich organizational base. Education and critical reflection were central throughout.

What could this history teach us? Until experience and resources reach a critical mass, and political and economic conditions scream for new solutions, sudden massive growth is unlikely. Failures may count as much as successes, depending on what is learned. Nor are established institutions—such as the AFL in the 1930s or the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the 1950s—likely to occupy the sole place at center stage.

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Vitality comes from an active base. And for an active base, education is essential.

For frontline organizers, then, the crucial link between union campaigns and movement building is not just militancy. As one organizer explained, you can take workers through mobilization after mobilization—but if they play no role in building and debating strategy, they won't necessarily learn anything. Movement building requires understanding how learning and organization take place at the bottom. This means frontline organizers, educators, and labor intellectuals alike beginning a process of open, critical reflection about failures as well as successes. Most of all, it means paying attention to workers'—not just organizers'—accounts of organizing.

The Example of the SEIU

Most analyses of union organizing rely primarily on organizers' experiences and observations. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU)'s successful 1996 contract campaign against Beverly Enterprises in Pennsylvania is one recent fight where workers mounted a powerful response to corporate abuses and a wider range of participants were able to tell at least part of their story. The battle was part of SEIU's Campaign for Dignity, Rights and Respect, an ongoing attempt to build a national movement of nursing-home workers by linking coordinated local bargaining to organizing. Workers' accounts—gathered through interviews during the spring of 1998—provide a rich description of the role of education and learning in organizing, leadership development, and movement building. The campaign also illustrates potential hurdles that may develop in the process of building a strong local base for organizing as well as bargaining.

A major goal of the Pennsylvania Dignity campaign was deepening leadership and activism of nursing-home members, specifically to strengthen both workplace organization and the role members could play in their communities and state politics. Three SEIU locals had already organized 10 percent of the state's nursing homes, including half of Beverly's homes in the state. But while prior rounds of coordinated bargaining had taught members the need to fight, activism had faded between contracts, and bargaining and servicing remained highly staff-dependent. At the same time, staff turnover was high, and the locals' activist agenda placed a heavy drain on resources.

To build maximum participation, the campaign began with a state Dignity Conference where activists adopted a bargaining platform, debated priorities, and brainstormed about how to build community support. Nursing homes were mapped and leaders identified. Negotiating committees were built with five workers from each home—sessions with Beverly had as many as one hundred workers—and caucus time was used for leadership training, role-playing, and strategy sessions. Meanwhile, rank-and-file members organized petitions over grievances, marched on the boss, and held "sticker days" to demonstrate solidarity.

The campaign shifted into higher gear when Beverly ripped down bulletin boards, denied staff representatives access to facilities, and made other unilateral changes. Members authorized a three day unfair labor practice strike that included blocking rush hour traffic in Harrisburg, the state capital. The turning point, however, came after Beverly rejected an unconditional offer to return to work and permanently replaced five hundred strikers. The three locals intensified their already vigorous community campaign. SEIU organizers coordinated escalating activities throughout the state. A political strategy was launched that combined electioneering with a campaign for nursing home "report cards" to notify residents and families of staffing levels and health-department citations and a campaign to block reimbursement of funds spent on union busting. Certain politicians were also targeted with militant sit-ins at the state capital.

Most important, "member mobilizers" were hired from as many homes as possible to help deepen participation and develop local actions. Chosen from recognized leaders replaced during the strike, they were assigned to international organizers who worked intensively with each of them to create individual plans for their development as leaders.

For member mobilizers and many of the worksite leaders who assisted them, the experience was transformational. In interviews, they eagerly described the revelation that they were

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the union, the power they experienced from being united, and the importance of joining forces with members at other nursing homes. Yet when members were asked what enabled this activism, they talked not about the militancy of mobilizations, but about the educational process they went through—what they had learned from other organizers and taught other workers.

Virtually every member who was interviewed described how learning to ask questions and get information—a core skill they were taught during the campaign—had transformed their lives and the lives of their nursing-home chapters. One described how members now read their contracts themselves and came to her with their own views of violations. Another said her chapter played a greater role in the community because of her ability to get the information she needed to respond to requests for help.

Although a communication structure established early in the campaign played a key role in sharing information, for the mobilizers, getting and giving personal support was inseparable from sharing data about the campaign. Being able to ask questions—and get responses—from local and international staff whenever they needed to helped to build the mobilizers' confidence. Openness and emotional support from the staff helped buffer the stress of the campaign. Mobilizers made themselves available to co-workers for personal and campaign needs day or night. This was central to the success of the effort, as was the safety to have open disagreements with staff and officers. So was having fun.

SHARING INFORMATION and building trust within the group as a whole became the foundation for group learning and decision making. Staff and officers were less effective in arguing for an action than co-workers, because only co-workers were personally affected by the outcome. Getting information from several co-workers was more effective than getting information from just one.

Most important, mobilizers did not see themselves as a core group separate form the rest of their members. Mobilizers knew they were part of a small group of "doers." But as "doers" they had to be representative of their co-workers and needed their backing to be effective. Co-workers had to be treated with respect, and trust earned gradually through honesty and personal support. Disagreements had to be accepted.

Helping co-workers build the confidence for leadership within their workgroups in turn meant creating a sense of safety and group support, as well as personal reassurance. One mobilizer explained: "Some of the quietest people were the most productive. [Some] just needed someone stronger telling them. . .they were capable. . . . Talking . . . was one way. [So was] taking someone with you to a meeting, and saying, 'Here's this report, will you give it for me?' [But] they have to make sure the core of the group of their fellow workers are going to jump. They have to know they can trust the group."

Finally, as exhausting as the campaign had been—a much-loved leader died from a heart attack during it—mobilizers and worksite leaders wanted to be prepared to do it again if necessary. When they were asked in interviews what it would take to be successful in the next round of bargaining, their response was clear: ongoing contact and communication between members in the different nursing homes. Most of all, workers had to be consulted while a strategy was being planned, not after.

Implications for Organizing

Beverly is only one campaign, mixed in its results. The campaign raised the visibility of SEIU organizing in the state and contributed to subsequent successes by demonstrating the union's ability to stay around for the long haul. But no additional Beverly homes were organized. Nursing homes with mobilizers generally had higher participation rates in state-wide SEIU activities. Two years after the campaign, mobilizers still reported members being more active and likely to stand up to their bosses; a number of homes have fully functioning chapter officers, as well as secondary leadership. Yet only a few homes now function independently of staff. The campaign did not produce a clear road map for success.

Nevertheless, the campaign succeeded brilliantly at deepening the commitment and par-

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ticipation of members, and it was clearly this depth of commitment that finally convinced Beverly that the union would endure until a contract was reached. There are important lessons here about education, organizing, and movement building.

Most fundamental is that while many staff organizers may be divided over the role members should play in campaign decision making, Beverly workers were clear. They valued the experience and expertise of staff—the Beverly campaign was extraordinary for the openness with which it was conducted and the closeness and respect that developed between members and staff. Yet members wanted an even larger role in planning. They wanted communications within the union to be continuous. And their concern for the campaign went beyond the contract signing to the life of their chapter and union as a whole. From this standpoint, the overarching lesson of Beverly is that workers may be willing to go much farther than most organizers commonly assume. They may be willing to make deeper commitments of time and resources. Willing to take more risks. And willing to become more involved in campaign planning and strategy.

What are the corollaries for organizing? One is the importance of open communication and decision making—of democracy—in evoking the degree of commitment and participation needed for serious campaigns. When mobilizers explained how information was shared, how learning to ask questions changed their lives, and the importance of feeling safe to disagree, they were describing what motivated them to deepen their commitment. They were also outlining the essential elements of union democracy in action.

As important as the role of democracy in building commitment is mobilizers' understanding of leadership. Organizers often talk about leadership in instrumental terms: doing what must be done to pressure the employer and win key supporters. But in the Beverly campaign, mobilizers' descriptions focused on learning and moving ahead with their co-workers. Education—including building confidence and trust—supported information sharing and open decision making and helped mobilizers to develop the group rather than remaining themselves simply a cadre of lead activists.

One unanswered question from the Beverly campaign is why some staff functioned much more effectively than others. One clue is that SEIU staff and officers' explanations of leadership and development in the Beverly campaign differed substantially from workers' descriptions. Beverly workers emphasized development of the group as a whole, personal support for learning, and freedom to disagree. But for staff, a leader was someone with followers. Leadership development meant teaching specific skills to workers so they could take over certain campaign tasks and local union functions. It was "pushing" workers by putting them into positions and situations where they had to speak to a larger group or the press or organize an action, deciding where they were in their development, and, as one organizer put it, "figuring out the direction they needed to go in [and] pushing them to go several steps beyond where they would have gone on their own." Only nursing-home workers who had recently joined the union staff tended to answer this question similarly to the member mobilizers. They didn't talk about "pushing" but instead about trust and personal support, education, and letting workers make their own decisions.

What is striking here is that in describing their roles, most SEIU staff organizers failed to capture the open communication style and support for growth and learning that members had praised and identified as central to the success of the campaign. If the members' description is accurate, it may mean organizers who were effective didn't fully understand what it was they were doing that worked. Becoming more conscious of actual practices could make them even more effective, perhaps easing burnout, turnover, and the stress of campaigns.

Organizing and Education

The Pennsylvania Dignity Campaign underscores how essential education and group learning are to union organizing aimed at movement building. It also suggests we need to develop and train staff, as one CWA educator and organizer put it, not just to educate leaders and committee members to mobilize co-workers, but to educate them to develop the group as a

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whole. This development of staff and leaders as educators is the missing link needed to support democratic decision making, participation, and organizing by members.

Bernard Moore, who supervises member-organizer training for SEIU, believes we are only beginning to accumulate the store of collective knowledge and understanding needed for effective organizing. One reason is that organizers don't talk enough about what they do. Few campaigns are properly debriefed, and Moore believes that as a result organizers often take the thing they do best and make it the main thing they do or teach. But because people learn so differently, this one thing only works for some people. And unless how someone learns is identified, they stop learning once pushing stops.

Beyond more thorough and frequent debriefing of campaigns, another step would be demilitarizing the model on which so much organizing is conducted. To Moore, as to members in the Beverly campaign, organizing is a personal act. "Often, people think that being a good organizer is survival of the fittest, and that this is how they themselves learned," he says. "But it's not true—we all had mentors. We may have been taught badly. But we weren't taught on our own. We don't know our own history, and then we impose it on other people." Members need to see each other. They need group support. They need mentoring. They need the safety to disagree and dispute strategy. Organizers need the same things as members: contact, community, safety to disagree, and mentoring—a personal relationship in which someone is paying attention to how they learn, and helping them move to the next step.

Objections to Education and Group Development

One objection to an approach that places so much emphasis on education and development of both staff and members is that it takes too much time and may work with contract campaigns but can't work with new organizing. A related objection is that there simply aren't enough resources.

The argument that this approach takes too much time rests in part on the assumption that an employer will move aggressively to end a union campaign before it gets off the ground. But it is precisely because of the ferocity of employer campaigns that workers need real workplace leadership. CWA's successful US Airways campaign is one practical example. As Larry Cohen explains, CWA made a heavy investment up front to develop a worker organization at US Airways that was a real organization, and not simply instrumental to winning a campaign—and if they hadn't they wouldn't still be there. Nor could they have sailed through a second election after the first was thrown out and continued their successful first contract campaign without missing a beat. To Cohen, there is little difference between so-called new organizing and internal organizing; developing a real organization is never a waste of time. In fact, he believes the time to gain recognition will shorten once the employer is convinced the union is there to stay.

As to lack of resources, Tom DeBruin, president of one of the three locals that conducted the Pennsylvania Dignity campaign, gives a short answer. Finding resources for keeping in touch with members, giving members the skills to play a larger role in politics and the economy as well as the workplace, strengthening local chapters and doing new organizing all place immense strains on staff and activists. Yet, for DeBruin, the alternative—continuing to lose power and make key decisions without worker participation or input—is worse. The problem is not whether to do both, but how.

In a last series of conversations with Paolo Freire, recorded in *We Make the Road by Walking*, Myles Horton, longtime director of the Highlander Center, talked about organizing and education. Faced with a choice between winning and educating, Horton thought that an organizer must choose winning, and if necessary provide the strategy for success. An educator, on the other hand, doesn't provide answers, or tactics, or strategies, but helps people learn to analyze the problems they face and develop different ways to act on them. An educator who begins by giving the answer, will have to end by giving the answer. Education isn't organizing, but it makes organizing—and movement building—possible.

Freire took the position that the process of

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organizing, if the organizers were good, inherently involves education in the beginning, the middle, and the end. Organizers grow and change by reflecting on what they have done and on what, and how, workers have learned. In the course of mobilizing, workers also discover a need for greater knowledge and understanding, and organizers must respond with education to meet those needs. The result is more power, clearer strategic thinking, and more resources to change society and for movement building.

In the United States, where organizing and education aren't well integrated, it is still difficult to make the space to do both. The split that the U.S. labor movement experiences between resources for organizing and servicing owes much to the postwar paradigm of business unionism, which encouraged member passivity and staff expertise. Yet we don't simply inherit this history. We also inhabit it. Waiting to educate and develop our members until after we have organized, all the while making decisions for them, compounds, rather than simplifies, our problems.

The promise is that once we move ahead with this process and begin to integrate organizing and education more deeply, we will magnify resources for organizing, and our capacity for organizing effectively. Indeed, if, as Bernard Moore suggested, we now share only a small part of our knowledge of organizing, sharing more of it, listening more carefully to our members, and further integrating education with organizing could produce a great windfall.

Moore puts the problem concisely. "If we ever stopped to understand what we are already doing right, we'd be a dangerous movement."

If we do, we will be. ●

KATHERINE SCIACCHITANO is a former labor lawyer and organizer. She teaches at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies in Washington, D.C.

STRIKING STEEL
SOLIDARITY REMEMBERED
Jack Metzgar

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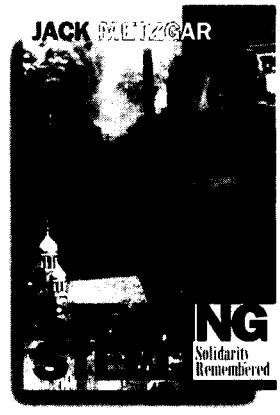

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When the Union's Inspiration. . .

Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered

Jack Metzgar

Jack Metzgar's Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered, *an excerpt from which appears below, is a combination of memoir, labor history, and meditation on the importance of unions in transforming the lives of industrial workers in the 1950s. It is the story of Jack's father, Johnny Metzgar, who, starting in 1930 at the age of seventeen, worked for four decades in the steel mills in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Johnny Metzgar's values, politics, life on the factory floor, and relationship to his family are evoked in a lyrical, yet unflinchingly honest way.* Striking Steel *is also a history of the 1959 steel strike, the largest strike in U.S. history—involving five hundred thousand workers on strike for 116 days—and, until now, virtually ignored by historians. This strike was not over wages or benefits, but rather, "work rules." For workers, according to Metzgar, the issue was freedom from "arbitrary authority and all the indignities, the humiliation, and the fear that come with being directly subject to the unlimited authority of another human being." The strike was won decisively by the union. Jack Metzgar's book, about one family's life in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, is a vivid tale about class and the labor movement in America.* —EDS.

JOHNNY METZGAR entered the mill in 1930, shortly after graduating from high school. He was seventeen years old. He got his job as a molder's helper, a good job because you learned a skill, through a combination of family connections and persistence. His father knew somebody in management who passed on a good word to a man in the plant's personnel office, and then Johnny badgered that man every day for three months until he got a job.

Johnstown Works of U.S. Steel was a relatively small plant, employing only about 2,000 in good years; its basic function was to produce equipment for other U.S.S. mills and mines. According to my father, he could have had a job at the much larger complex of Bethlehem Steel because it had a policy of hiring the sons of its disabled workers, but he wouldn't "give them that satisfaction after what they did to my father." He was referring to Bethlehem's meager ($30 a month) disability payment and general indifference more than to the accident itself.

Evidently there was work in 1930 and into 1931. He worked six days a week, from eight to ten hours a day. He got paid for sixty hours a week, but on any given day he could leave after eight hours if his work for that day was completed; on the other hand, he could not leave until the day's work *was* completed, even if that took more than ten hours, though that happened rarely. But those long weeks didn't last. In 1932 he had only fifty-two days of work; in 1933, only eighty. "Work picked up after that," he said.

He learned the molder's trade from a friend and second cousin of his father's, Runt Espey, and enjoyed the work at first along with the camaraderie among the men, though not the dusty conditions that left you "still coughing two or three hours after you left work." He transferred out of molding in 1940 to the Lower Shop, where he eventually worked as a machinist making rolls for U.S.S. rolling mills. He remained in the Lower Shop until he retired in 1969, at the age of fifty-six. In good times, when there was lots of work, he was a machinist; when work was slack, he bumped down several job classifications to become a "hooker," the person who attached things to an overhead

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crane for delivery elsewhere in the mill.

He joined the union at his first opportunity in 1936, having been signed up by Runt Espey and in turn signing up others among the younger men, including my Uncle Stan. Runt, who was short and cocky, like my father, had some job security and not a little shop-floor power through his craft skills. There were certain molds that only Runt knew how to do correctly, and many others that benefited from his skills and knowledge. In addition, in my father's words, he was a "crafty bugger" who "had something on everybody, or could make you think he did," and most foremen or superintendents had to solicit Runt's cooperation if they were to get production. Runt, therefore, could openly advocate for the union without fear of losing his job. Others could not.

If the company had found out he had joined the union, my father would not only have lost his job at U.S. Steel, but he would also have been put on a do-not-hire "blacklist" at Bethlehem and at the various smaller fabricating plants in town. Before the Wagner Act, the companies made sure everybody knew about the blacklist and were very demonstrative in using it. After Wagner, which made such practices illegal, they were more subtle about it, but according to local legend, once you got on the blacklist, you *never* got off. Once, sometime in the 1950s while we were out shopping together, my father pointed to a man who had been fired from Bethlehem before the union and explained that the blacklist was why "even today" that man had to work as a grocery-store clerk.

I once asked my father if he had thought, when he first joined, that the union would accomplish all that it had. Without hesitating, he answered, "No. That's not why I joined. I didn't really think it would do any good. But I didn't care. I was young, single, and I hated my job, and . . . I just couldn't live with the fear. I was just rebelling. I knew the company hated the union, so I joined. I don't know what I'd have done if I'd had a family then." The fear, he explained, was the fear of losing your job, and some foremen used that fear like a whip. He told numerous stories to illustrate how this worked, none of which involved him directly. "I was young, and I really didn't care if they fired me or not—I hated the mill—and they knew that. It [not caring] protected me. They went after the guys with families, the guys who couldn't afford to lose their jobs. If you let them know you were afraid for your job, they owned you. They owned your job, and that meant they owned *you*." The worst of these stories, which he and others told me several times over the years, went like this.

When work was slack during the depression, before the union, foremen were in control of who worked and who didn't on any given day. In 1932, for example, my father had to report for work every morning six days a week, even though the company needed him only fifty-two of the more than 300 days on which he reported. To get work, workers would vie with each other to curry favor with foremen and superintendents. One fellow who had a reputation as a particularly good worker had been employed steadily during one period; to ensure his employment, he cut his foreman's grass in the summer and shoveled snow for him in the winter without pay; he also brought homemade kielbasa and other goodies to the foreman on a regular basis. One day the foreman ran into this worker while the worker was with his sixteen-year-old daughter, a particularly beautiful young woman, as the story goes. The next day at work the foreman, a married man with a family and himself only slightly younger than his employee, asked the worker if he could arrange a "date" with his daughter. The worker said he'd see and would let the foreman know the next day. The next day the worker arrived with a particularly large supply of freshly made kielbasa, but told the foreman he would be unable to arrange the date. At this point he was summarily fired and was subsequently without work for the better part of a year—at a time when there was no unemployment compensation and "relief" was a breadline.

This story got told and retold because it was so extreme. Most foremen would not dream of doing anything like this. Most foremen were people you could reason with. But they all had this power over your life and the life of your family, and most of them used it in both big and little ways, sometimes with a purpose,

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sometimes just out of meanness, but always with the same humiliating result. The worst part of this story, for my father, was not the man's being without work for so long. The worst part was that he didn't, that he couldn't, just say no—that even in refusing the foreman's request, he couldn't "stand up to him," couldn't maintain his dignity.

As my father used to say, "If the union didn't do anything else, it put an end to that." Though it didn't happen all at once, the union eventually stripped not only the foreman but even the company itself of this arbitrary power.

At first, in 1937, it just gave a guy like Runt Espey something additional to work with, a way to extend to others some of the protections he enjoyed based on his craft skills. The grievance procedure in those early years didn't take away much of the foreman's formal power, but it meant that a union griever could go over his head to a superintendent, and then the union could go over a department superintendent's head if a complaint seemed justified. This immediately eliminated the worst excesses of foremen, which (as in the story above) violated existing company policy. And, with a little imagination, a crafty bugger like Runt, who was the molders' first grievance man, could use the formal power of the union contract to extend his informal power in the labor process. Pretty soon the guys on the molding floor were going to Runt asking, "Can he [the foreman] do that?" and Runt almost uniformly would say, "Hell no!" and then go have a talk with the foreman. The foreman needed Runt's craft skills, and now his leadership, to get production; besides, many foremen, like most rank-and-file workers, were none too sure what the new system required of them. In this context, Runt was able to give the union a power and a presence on the molding floor all out of proportion to what had been agreed upon in March 1937 by John L. Lewis and U.S.S. head Myron Taylor in a hotel in New York City. To my father, who was 25 then, it was indescribably exhilarating to observe this process.

In these first years, Runt gained some of the arbitrary power the foremen used to have, and though Runt could be mean, both to foremen and to workers who didn't support the union strongly enough, he never, according to my father, used his power "against the men." Though I never met him, I have a clear memory of Runt Espey from the stories my father told me when I was very young. Besides the company-and-the-union stories, Runt figured in most of the stories my father used to instruct me in how to be a "little guy" (which referred to both height and strength) in a world of big men. Runt had a mean streak, and he would sometimes humiliate others just for the satisfaction of doing it; he particularly liked making a fool out of big guys who were soft, which could hurt a lot more and a lot longer than a punch in the face. Runt was also vain—he liked to be recognized as a leader and to be deferred to. My father both gloried in and was ashamed of Runt's negative qualities, with which he clearly identified, but in his scheme of things these qualities were necessary and justified if, in general and for the most part, they served a larger purpose. "We needed a guy like that in those days," he said. Speaking as much about himself as about Runt, he would say, "Not everybody can be like your Mom and Stan [who we all recognized as models of the quiet, selfless Christian humility we were supposed to strive for]. We needed a guy like that at the time. Otherwise, we'd still be slaves."

RUNT, in today's jargon, was my father's role model. But nobody's perfect, even role models, and that's why the union wouldn't really be a union if it had to depend on the consistent righteousness of the Runt Espeys. The idea was to eliminate arbitrary power itself, not just shift it from one person to another. Though it didn't happen all at once, that's exactly what the union contract eventually achieved.

Assigning work, firing, disciplining, even warning a steelworker—by the 1950s nobody—not the foreman, the company, nor any union leader, from the shop floor to international headquarters—had much discretion in doing any of these things. The rules laid out in the union contract determined who got laid off and who worked during bad times, who got overtime and who worked night shift, who worked in Job Classification 10 and who worked in Job Classification 15. If you had the seniority and could do the job, it was yours by right. Nobody

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gave it to you. It was yours according to the rules everybody had agreed to. Though you needed the union to ensure that the rules were followed and, indeed, to get the rules written down and agreed to in the first place, you didn't need to be in anybody's good graces; you didn't need to bring anyone kielbasa, not even the union.

This system of rule-making and rule-observing is the essence of bureaucracy, and it has its disadvantages for both workers and managers. But it is also the essence of industrial democracy in the American system. Today, as labor historian David Brody has shown so clearly, both the left and the right attack this "workplace rule of law" with little sense of its role in liberating workers from arbitrary authority and all the indignities, the humiliation, and the fear that come with being directly subject to the unlimited authority of another human being. Bureaucratic work rules, and the legalistic grievance system designed to interpret and enforce them, take away a lot of management discretion that may be desirable for competing in a more fiercely competitive world. They also bind workers as well as managers, restricting them from taking things into their own hands with wildcat strikes and other spontaneous job actions that might oppose injustices allowable under the contract; in the long run, this may undermine worker militancy and the very capacity for concerted action. Both the right and the left have a point. But the easy use of "bureaucracy" as a broad pejorative with rich negative connotations allows them to avoid the issue of what the alternative to living by impersonal rules might be.

Sometimes complaints about "bureaucracy" refer simply to the *excesses* of the impersonal observation of rules and regulations. Such complaints are directed simply at "bureaucrats" who lack common sense or a human touch in applying the rules to specific situations. But the casualness of current attacks on bureaucracy and bureaucrats often includes a weariness with democracy and its requirements, a weariness with the rule of law itself, and a dangerous yearning for leadership unrestricted by the results of previous generations' struggles, outcomes and decisions. This is certainly true of the free-market right with its deep belief in Great Men operating unfettered in the marketplace, but it was also true of a large part of the New Left with its attraction to the style and drama of revolution more than to its substance.

In my father's view of things, the very impersonality of the labor contract as a binding document was the foundation of his freedom and dignity, and a great deal of peace of mind as well. He believed in what was called then "the sanctity of the contract": "You have to live by the contract. It binds us as well as them [management or the company]. But it's *our* contract. We were bound before. They weren't." The union itself, not anything that it did or didn't do; the contract itself, not anything that was in it; these were the fundamentals, "the big thing," as he said. The rest was gravy.

Which is not to say he was indifferent to the details, just that he knew that neither God nor the Devil were in them. Specific work rules and working conditions were crucial to him, and he had a way of dividing them from wages and benefits, a way that coincided with the split between work and family that was so much a part of 1950s culture. The wages and benefits were for the family; the working conditions, for him alone. The money for both "came out of the same pot," he would say, and we should not expect him to degrade his working conditions (or fail to improve them) so that he could bring a little more home to us.

Not that it seemed we ever had to make that choice. Indeed, it was in the wages and benefits that the rest of us could see the revolution "since the union." And unlike so many other Americans, who just saw "prosperity" improving their lives, we saw the union doing it. Take 1946, for example. The union wanted twenty-five cents (most other CIO unions wanted closer to thirty cents), but the company allowed it could afford only a dime. The government recommended eighteen and a half cents, and that's what we got. Into the 1960s, the Steelworkers' wage-and-benefit package was always bargained and reported in cents, not in percentage-increase terms. This was done to benefit the lower pay grades, but it also had the effect of making the impact of wage bargaining more clear and meaningful to Steel-

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worker families like mine. Through ten sets of negotiations and five strikes from 1946 to 1956, the steel companies fought every advance the union sought—and did so in a highly public way. It was pretty simple to figure out that without the union we wouldn't have gotten eight and a half of those eighteen and a half cents in 1946, and only a little more complicated to reason that without the union the companies would never have offered that dime in the first place.

From the time my father joined the union in 1936 until the 1959 strike, the average *real* wage of steelworkers increased 110 percent, with the bulk of the increase coming after the war. Think of that a minute. Think what it does for a family's well-being to have more real spending power year after year, to experience a steady, relentless improvement in your standard of living for more than two decades. And, though they were often in the forefront, it wasn't just the steelworkers who experienced these benefits: the average real wage of all manufacturing workers increased 89 percent during the same period. This was not gravy. This was the very basis of life for a wage worker in a capitalist society. It meant, first, that you could routinely cover the basic necessities of life. Then it meant you had something very few workers had ever had up until then—discretionary income, income that in a sense you didn't need, income that you could *decide* how to spend. Eventually, and this had happened by 1959, it meant an upgrading in what counted as necessities. In 1946, we did not have a car, a television set, or a refrigerator. By 1952 we had all those things, and I can remember vividly the excitement of the day when each arrived. And by 1959 these were all necessities, without which we could not have imagined living.

But the real wage increase doesn't cover the half of it. In 1949, the Steelworkers struck the companies for forty-two days in order to get them to fund a pension plan and to partially fund health insurance. These were nothing to brag about at first. The pension formula committed the companies to supplement Social Security so that a steelworker with enough service could receive $100 a month in retirement (at a time when it took at least $250 a month to live). Likewise, health insurance only covered certain hospital costs and major procedures by doctors, and the company only paid half the premium. But they were a big deal at the time, and the companies at first resisted them on principle as "un-American and contrary to the most cherished ideals of self-reliance and personal initiative." After forty-two days, the companies gave up on that principle, and the union then improved on the substance with each negotiation in the 1950s.

In 1952 when my mother had her first heart attack and spent quite a while in the hospital, most of our costs were covered by the health insurance. Still, Mom's heart attack set us back. We had to sell the frame house we were buying and move to a government housing project (very nice then). My mother had more heart attacks, but we all just kept plugging along. According to a mantra my father repeated almost until the day he died, "Without the health insurance, our lives would have been wrecked."

And the pension eventually turned out to be a wonder. The idea of retiring at the age of fifty-six and being able to live comfortably, if frugally, was unimaginable in 1946. Though the "winter shack" he rented with his second wife in Florida was a decidedly modest dwelling, it allowed him to avoid more than a decade of northern winters when he "should have been in the mill aching and freezing"—and yet to return to the glorious spring, summer, and autumn of the western Pennsylvania hills. What is it worth for a man to have thirteen years of contentment like this—when *everything* he hates in life is avoided?

But the life, health, and disability insurance, and the pension the Steelworkers won in 1949 were for more than just themselves. Besides the peace of mind they provided, by taking away the need to save up for hard times they released savings for other things and made buying on installment (and credit in general) rational and feasible behavior. This made for more discretionary income. This process was further aided by the union's winning of Supplemental Unemployment Benefits (SUB) in the fifty-eight-day strike of 1956. SUB supplemented government-funded un-

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employment compensation to pay about 80 percent of a steelworker's wages when he was laid off (by the 1970s it was paying as much as 95 percent). In a brutally cyclical industry like steel, this gave a security and predictability to life that allowed steelworker families to pursue long-term goals and investments (whether buying a house, expanding the one you had, or saving for children's education). All this meant more discretionary income, more discretion itself, more freedom to develop your life in relation to your own values and choices.

THE PERCEPTION and remembrance of the 1950s as a time of repressive conformism and spiritless materialism might relate to the middle-class organization man, the white-collar professional and managerial worker of the time. It did not relate to us. All the discretion that the foreman and the company were losing was flowing right into our home. There were choices. There were prospects. There were possibilities. Few of these had been there before. Now they were. And because they came slowly, year by year, contract by contract, strike by bitter strike, they gave a lilting, liberating feeling to life—a sense that no matter what was wrong today, it could be changed, it could get better—in fact, by the late 1950s, that it was quite likely that it *would* get better. Hang in there. Stick with it. These moral injunctions to daily fortitude made so much more sense then when there were so many visible payoffs for doing so. And as my father would find out, my mother, my sister and I—like nearly everybody else in American society—were learning to tolerate less and less repression from anybody or anything, including him. If what we lived through in the 1950s was not liberation, then liberation never happens in real human lives. ●

JACK METZGAR is professor of humanities at Roosevelt University in Chicago.

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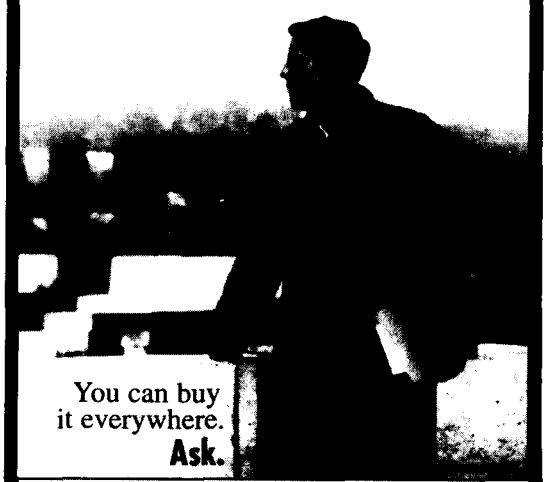

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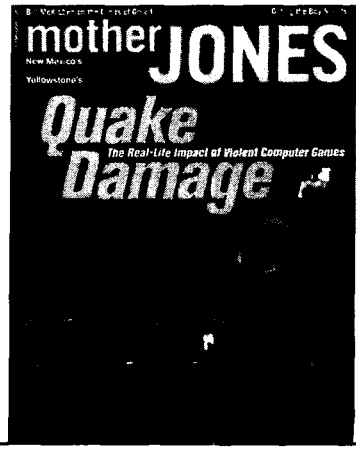

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A Place for Rage

"Our goals, our values, our own morality, must be visible already in our actions. The new human beings we want to create—we must already strive to be these human beings right here and now."
—Herbert Marcuse.

Rachel Neumann

THERE IS AN image from the late sixties, so famous now as to be cliché, of a young woman slipping a flower in the barrel of a soldier's gun. There's another photograph, from Paris in 1968, of a young man in a black turtleneck surrounded by running and ducking protesters. The man has a rock in his hand and his arm is pulled back, ready to throw. To these I add one from the protests in Seattle last November against the World Trade Organization (WTO): a police officer standing at attention in full riot gear, his face hidden behind a gas mask and his body buried in black padding. On the sidewalk in front of him, someone has written HUG ME in large letters with an arrow pointing to the officer. I turn these images over in my mind. The peaceful determination of a young woman confronting potential violence with a flower. The unleashed power of the rock in the young man's hand. The humor, the hope, the impossibility of putting one's arms around the police officer's heavily armored body.

The underlying question these images present is how to negotiate between violence and nonviolence as means of protest. It's a conflict that started long before the sixties, long before the struggle for Indian independence began in 1915. In the last twenty years in the United States, this question has felt less urgent. With so little visible resistance and so few enduring victories for true democracy, there's a temptation on the left to take what we can get, whatever its form. And yet the question flares up again now in response to the possibility of building a real movement out of the actions in Seattle: How do we present ourselves? How do we press our advantage?

Nonviolent protest, at its best, is the enactment of the prefiguration Marcuse describes. It works on the principles of solidarity and pacifism in the face of aggression. Nonviolence defines itself, even in name, in contrast—a protester going limp in the arms of a rigid police officer, a group sitting down and singing in the path of an oncoming tank. The state response is officers in uniforms, tear gas, tanks, arrests. This show of force becomes, paradoxically, evidence of vulnerability; the need for the state to protect what it has at any cost demonstrates that the current system is constructed and enforced, not natural, not self-perpetuating. Nonviolent protest is a considered way of being; in solidarity, people learn to relate to each other as part of a mutually supportive and mutually dependent community. This contradicts the social conditioning that says other people are a threat to our own success and we must each look out only for ourselves. Nonviolence is also effective theater—the media present images of pacifism in the face of force, innocence as the victim of violence.

And at the same time, there are those who refuse to play by the rules, who smash windows, draw graffiti on the walls, and shout back at the cops. Are these people outside the "morality" of progressive movements? These outbreaks aren't just adolescent rage. Aimé Césaire described the violent process of colonization: it enforces control by refusing people their own emotions and natural reactions. Our current global system is a process of colonization. It not only creates organizations like the WTO that replace national sovereignty with corporate interests, it also displaces human ways of relating to each other and substitutes monetary relationships in which human worth is mea-

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sured in dollars.

This system would prefer that people respond to exploitation with complacency and politeness. But what becomes of people who work full time for less than a living wage, without health care, without day care? What emotion builds up after years of work in dead-end jobs? What happens after finding out you live near a toxic-waste dump? That your son is arrested for driving while black? Rage is a natural and required response—so repressed by the powers that be that it often becomes a lashing-out, a misdirected form of resistance.

A POLITICS THAT expresses any of this messy emotion is often considered—in nonviolent circles—to be "not following process" and "acting like the enemy." But to condemn the rage by judging those who express it, without acknowledging the larger context of systematic state violence is to strengthen the oppression. Because rage is a natural and required response, the question is not whether it is good or bad or morally right, but what we do with it. How can we direct it into energy that creates a more just society? Traditional nonviolence is, of course, not a passive response. It is an organized attempt to confront injustice without succumbing to the violence of the state. And yet, traditionally it has often been the precursor to vanguard movements impatient with both the level of violence directed at the movement and the slowness of change. Out of the civil rights movement came the Black Panthers. Out of Students for a Democratic Society, the Weathermen. The system commonly tries to funnel the rage that oppression produces into other, politically acceptable, outlets—to turn aggression into sports tournaments, graffiti into sanctioned art projects—but there's something about institutionally sanctioned, structured outrage that, because of the official seal of approval, ceases to exist as rage.

"Need I recall to any student of history the serious rioting and destruction of property which has preceded every advance in the liberties of which England is so proud," wrote Frances Berkeley Young in the *Nation* in 1912 in response to an article describing women fighting for equal rights in England (smashing windows and "pestering public ministers") as "hysterical, crazy, and therefore irresponsible women."

Non-institutionalized rage expresses itself in a number of ways, many of them clearly harmful and abusive. Yet if those who advocate nonviolence as the only route to social change want to create a world in which violence doesn't exist, then they must acknowledge that nonviolence and violence have been linked historically and examine the sometimes violent expression of anger and how it can be transformed into something progressive. Those who make quick moral judgments often conflate and dismiss many expressions of rage without examining their strategic value. Property destruction is one such expression. When speaking about "violence," it's important to distinguish the rock thrown through a window from the rock thrown at another human being. This is not a semantic distinction. All expression of anger is on a continuum, but historically property destruction doesn't necessarily lead to violence toward other human beings. The Luddites smashed machinery, the Wobblies closed mills and mines, the English suffragists broke windows, and Earth First activists tinkered with the engines and tires of logging trucks—all without injuring other human beings.

One crucial element of change (and a necessity for building a larger movement) is the visible sign of resistance. Property destruction allows for a change in landscape, a visual punctuation. The institutional response to protest in the United States in recent years has been to clean things up. Once people are arrested and silenced, there's no evidence that resistance took place. The broken window theory implies that if you can't see the smashed glass, it isn't a problem. You can't see homeless people? They must have found homes. You don't see graffiti? Must be that the anger and boredom (and creativity) behind it are gone. What if property destruction could also be creation, an added or changed image left behind? Particularly at this time—when nascent coalitions are forming against the privileging of profit over people—destruction of material things may be an apt response.

I approach these possibilities with caution.

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Property destruction has often been linked with larger uses of violence. Because of the way that men in particular are taught both to repress and vent their anger, it often comes out as an exaggerated representation of masculinity, reproducing instead of contradicting the existing power structure. Violent opposition in this country, from the Weathermen to the Black Panthers, has often internalized violence, taking out their anger on each other as opposed to a larger target. There is always a question of control, of keeping the energy of the initial emotion and transforming its expression. Is it possible to target this anger without deflating it?

Of course there are also legitimate questions about when is the time for property destruction and when is the time for sitting in the street (and when, if ever, the two can happen productively simultaneously). At times it may be necessary for thousands of people to lock arms at the entrances to a convention center. At other times, a few people may be able to capture media attention and define an issue through targeted property destruction. Note the instant fame of José Bové, the French farmer who tried to dismantle a McDonald's. It is important to remember that these choices are, in large part, decided by media attention—they are strategic, not moral questions.

I AM NOT suggesting that property destruction is the only or even the best answer to these questions. It simply represents one expression of rage that nonviolent movements have not figured out how to either integrate or control; it has its own energy and validity. To think about the ways in which protest uses emotion in terms of strategy, not morality, shifts the debate. Much discussion of these questions has been framed by broad definitions of violence and nonviolence. The words have been thrown around so often that, like pro-life and pro-choice, any actual meaning becomes unintelligible. An authentic discussion requires a restructuring of language, an interest in moving beyond the oversimplified debate of Gandhi vs. Che, Martin vs. Malcolm.

Clearly the rage that people feel as a result of exploitation and alienation, and the expression of that rage, is not the same as the violence committed by the overseers of coffee plantations, by sweatshop managers in New York and Taiwan, by sugar cane and pineapple field owners. A communiqué, sent out after the Seattle protests, from the ACME collective reads, "We contend that property destruction is not a violent activity unless it destroys lives or causes pain in the process. Private property, especially corporate private property, is in itself infinitely more violent than any action taken against it." They go on to distinguish between personal and private property—the things that we own that have worth because they are dear to us (books, photos, the homes we have worked on) and property that exists solely at the expense of others and with the purpose of generating more capital.

There are few enough moments these days where real change is possible. The insistence by progressive movements to protest in the *morally* right way is, in part, the result of the scarcity of media opportunities for progressives. But to build greater momentum requires creating a language and organizing movements that are not just part of the officially sanctioned and familiar political landscape. Traditional nonviolence, as it has been practiced in this country, has become part of familiar political behavior. Gandhi is quoted on ads for First National Bank and Apple Computer. Protesters dutifully file into protest pens and, as in the massive protests over the shooting of Amadou Diallo in New York, arrests are choreographed in advance. This last example was both effective as a media event and oddly disconcerting for some participants. In large part performance, it brought the issue to the media's attention, but didn't address the frustration and anger of those who had been brutalized by the police. Nor, in the end, did it lead to "justice" in the form of criminal convictions of the officers who shot Diallo. How do we keep the principles of what has traditionally been called nonviolence intact and, at the same time, nurture an authentic and growing movement? Who will see themselves in our actions? Of all the graffiti spray-painted during the protests in Seattle last November, one piece stays with me: "Don't Forget: We Are Winning." The "We" here was everybody—the union marchers, the environmentalists in turtle costumes, the anar-

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chists in black—and the brightly painted scrawl had a salutary effect on more than one tear-gassed protester. And even in Seattle, that "We" was not broad enough. We need to create forms of protest that have at their center room for those who are most silenced in our society, a space for those who are most often ignored.

Langston Hughes was describing, not threatening, when he wrote about the explosion of a dream deferred. How do we make room for the rage that has built up for so many years? This is something we have to do—not only in order to create a more economically and racially diverse movement of (and not just on behalf of) the most oppressed, but also so as to acknowledge our own anger and the ways we have internalized the violence around us. We all feel that rage. If there is a morality involved here, it is this: if we want the lives we envision to be prefigured in our actions, as Marcuse writes, this honesty is required: to recognize ourselves in the anger we see on the street. To act in the world as we would like the world to be requires making a space for the fulcrum of our emotions. It is dishonest not to talk about the intangibles: the feeling in the air and the smiles on people's faces as the Nike sign was being dismantled in Seattle. It wasn't so much the rage of the people destroying the sign—they were calm and focused. It was the reflection, and the release, of the crowd's rage and a symbol of how it could be transformed into action. Without the sign, the place felt different; as if it belonged to us, the people in the streets and not the police. We need to hold these questions close to us: how to create not only a language but a way of being that holds true to ideas of solidarity and community, that does not recreate the violence we are protesting against, and, at the same time, holds a place for rage. ●

RACHEL NEUMANN is an assistant editor of *Dissent*.

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David Glenn Responds

BEFORE WE talk about Seattle, a few words about Milwaukee. In February 1839—less than a decade after they'd dispossessed the Menominees and other local Native Americans—the settlers of southeastern Wisconsin had a problem to solve. Hundreds of farmers had staked out claims on land to which the federal government held title. Now Washington announced that much of this land would be sold at a public auction, opening the door to speculators and land sharks from Chicago and beyond. The settlers feared that they would lose everything they'd toiled for—that the free market would uproot their families just as they themselves had uprooted the area's indigenous people a few years earlier.

Their response was to form "shark committees." As the amateur historian Robert Wells gives the story, the federal auction, which was held in the village of Milwaukee, went like this:

> "I bid twenty," a land shark said.
>
> Several muscular committeemen grabbed him and suggested politely that he had made a mistake. He insisted that he had a right to bid. They wasted no time in argument. Hauling him down to the river—someone had thoughtfully chopped a hole in the ice—they tossed him in. If he came back to bid some more, they threw him in again. After a while, even the most stubborn of the outside speculators was convinced and the settlers got their land at ten shillings an acre, with a limit of 320 acres per man.

This story leaves me with two equal and opposite reactions:

(1) *Milwaukee today needs some of that old shark-committee spirit.* The city has been astonishingly quiescent during the past three decades, as thousands of its high-wage manufacturing jobs have been relocated to Mexico, China, and other countries whose labor movements are tyrannized. Why hasn't there been more resistance? And in the wake of Wisconsin's famous welfare-reform program (nearly 90 percent of the state's recipients have left the rolls), why aren't there visible, angry social movements concerned with child care, health care, the sexist division of housework, and all the other issues faced by women in poverty? The audacity of the shark committees—their willingness to disrupt the social order, their refusal meekly to accept their fate—is in short supply these days in the city they founded.

(2) *Thank God the shark committees' style of mob violence isn't tolerated in Milwaukee anymore.* Which is to say: I'm grateful that the state suppressed the white racist mobs that tried to disrupt school desegregation here in the 1970s. I'm grateful that the state will try to arrest and prosecute anyone who goes around smashing windows, for political reasons or otherwise. Of course our justice system is profoundly unjust in some ways, but I also think it's obvious that the state's defense of civic order is a fundamental and necessary condition of a decent society.

SO, WITH THOSE two ideas in tension, on to Seattle. At the World Trade Organization (WTO) meetings, for the first time in many years, we saw broad-based, left-wing movements that wanted not only to go through the rituals of protest but to make some real noise (or, as some of the anarchist groups there put it, to "fuck shit up"). The Milwaukee farmers of 1839 might have been proud.

Rachel Neumann writes that a very small number of the Seattle activists gave "visual punctuation" to the proceedings by smashing storefront windows—notably targeting retailers like Nike, whose overseas labor practices have been especially evil. This vandalism may have raised Nike's insurance premiums by a nickel or two, but no one was physically injured.

Let's put all questions of ethics aside for a moment, and ask, Did the vandalism in Seattle help the protesters' cause? It would be easy to answer with a simple no: it was counterproductive, because it repulsed tens of millions of citizens who might otherwise have been sympathetic, and because it gave the mass media covering Seattle something to talk about other than labor rights, the environment, and police brutality. And all of that is true, I think. On the other hand, with the audience that

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counts most in the short run—the WTO bureaucrats and their courtiers—the broken windows probably *did* strike a useful chord. When Thomas Friedman and Al Gore lie awake at night during the next few years agonizing about globalization, the Seattle vandalism, a vivid symbol of potential global unrest, will surely flash through their minds.

So in terms of *realpolitik*, let's call it a wash.

Given all this—the vandalism caused no physical injuries, and it may have helped the cause as much as hurt it—should we accept Neumann's argument that property destruction "may be an apt response" to social injustice? I am far more skeptical about this idea than Neumann is. At the very least, I think some basic ground rules should be obeyed.

In late December, a few weeks after the WTO meetings, the Campaign for Labor Rights (CLR) sent out an e-mail bulletin about the U.S.-based Fresh Del Monte Produce (no relation to the better-known Del Monte). According to the CLR report, Fresh Del Monte appears to have directed efforts to crush an established union at one of its Guatemalan subsidiary's banana plantations. In October 1999, a band of two hundred armed men forced the union leaders to resign, and wages at the plantation have since dropped by 20 percent. Captain Carlos Enrique Hernandez Diaz, the chief of security for Fresh Del Monte in Guatemala, was allegedly part of the goon squad.

Assuming these reports are true, we're talking about a violent crime against some courageous and deeply impoverished workers. As Neumann says, "rage is a natural and required response." But would it be ethical for me to drive down to Florida this afternoon and throw some rocks through Fresh Del Monte's headquarters?

Almost certainly not. Or better, only if three conditions are met.

(1) *Every effort should already have been made to bring Fresh Del Monte to justice through less drastic means.* This principle—the ancient idea that violence should be resisted with the minimum feasible amount of counterviolence—ought to be obvious.

It poses a real challenge for radicals: to find new nonviolent ways of puncturing the social equilibrium, new modes of protest that don't seem pathetically stale. Neumann is absolutely correct when she says that many of our familiar techniques, even mass arrests, have become bloodless and routinized. I, too, was depressed by the emotional flatness that crept into the Diallo protests at City Hall after a few weeks. But this dilemma is no excuse for us to cross the line into raw property destruction (and in any case, broken windows themselves would start to seem trite pretty quickly).

(2) *In my vandalism I should be working in harmony with a visible, democratic social movement.* I should not be a vanguardist, operating in contempt of society instead of within it. As some of Neumann's own historical examples (the Algerian revolution, the Weathermen) teach us, vanguardist organizations with cults of "action" can easily turn monstrous. If Middle Americans were repulsed by the Seattle vandalism in part because they're worried about precedents like these, who can blame them?

And there's reason to worry that a few of the sects at the WTO protests may be heading down that road. The particular anarchist groups that probably committed the small Seattle crimes seem to be steeped in a subculture that romanticizes violence and is much too pessimistic about the prospects for building broad, democratic social movements in the United States.*

(3) *I should be willing to acknowledge that my vandalism breached the social contract—by serving time in jail.* Having expressed my rage, I should drive from Fresh Del Monte down to the police station and start doing my forty-five days for criminal destruction of property. This doesn't mean that I believe all our social arrangements and criminal laws are perfectly just. Hardly. It's a sign that I recognize norms of decency that Fresh Del Monte does not. And it's a gesture of good faith from the visible, democratic social movement I work with (see condition 2) to the public at large: as we fight for radical change, we will always respect the basic norms of civilization. (And many in the public at large will probably support us because they'll know that we'd already tried every fea-

*For more about the tone of these groups, see L.A. Kauffman's essay at http://www.salon.com/news/feature/1999/12/10/anarchists/index.html.)

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sible less violent tactic before we resorted to property destruction.)

And I shouldn't whine about being a "political prisoner," either—that would be an insult to the suffering of *actual* political prisoners, in Guatemala and elsewhere, who have been persecuted for exercising basic rights. In the more-or-less liberal and democratic United States, as long as the state gives equal treatment to (a) a left-wing journalist who has smashed Fresh Del Monte's windows, (b) a frat boy who has smashed a sports bar's windows, (c) a racist skinhead who has smashed an anarchist bookstore's windows, then any talk of political prisoners in these cases would be callow posturing. (If the state's treatment of these cases is in fact unequal, then our American Civil Liberties Union dues should be put to work.)

By the way, I'd apply this principle of cheerfully serving jail time not only to the vandals, but to the broader civil disobedience in Seattle: the blocking of streets and the "shutting down" of the WTO's first afternoon session. These were great acts—they were the heart of what happened in Seattle—but they were also illegal as hell. Should the state arrest Operation Rescue members if they try to disrupt a national Planned Parenthood convention? Well, the standards should be the same across the board.

A COUPLE OF years ago in New York City, community gardeners faced a situation very similar to that of the Milwaukee farmers of 1839. They'd staked out plots on land to which the city held title—spent years of labor nurturing gardens and building block committees—and now the city was selling those gardens to for-profit developers.

The gardeners and their allies responded with a campaign that struck just the right tone, that treated New York's political machinery with exactly the disrespect it deserves. And they found dozens of fresh ways of puncturing business as usual—most famously when a few activists released thousands of crickets in the middle of a city land auction.

So this was not goody-goody, strictly legal stuff; but neither did it slide into the kind of raw destruction that might have alienated important allies or generated embittered vanguardism. And, although many gardens have been lost, the campaign did manage to save hundreds of them. This is our challenge, I think, and the best way of interpreting Herbert Marcuse's call to "be these [new] human beings here and now": to avoid lifeless bone-dry reformism on the one hand and revolutionary posturing and cheap violence on the other. ●

DAVID GLENN is writing a book about the city of Milwaukee and the American social contract.

Rachel Neumann Replies

IN HIS APPRECIATION of Milwaukee's civility, David Glenn calls the state defense of civic order "a fundamental and necessary condition of a decent society." But I don't think our current state is defending civic order; it's defending the concentration of wealth in the bank accounts of the few from the anger of the many. I would prefer a community, rather than state, response—a community defense when the community's agreed upon standards are violated.

All of Glenn's examples are of physical violence toward other human beings; he's making quite a large jump from racist attacks over school desegregation (which hurt people where they live and work) to damage to billboards or neon signs owned by corporations. The latter is not violence against people or against a neighborhood; nor does it necessarily involve breaking a community standard. It is a limited and targeted attack on property owned by companies that themselves perpetuate violence.

First, about Seattle. Glenn calls it a wash. He argues that the property destruction repulsed Middle America and gave the media something else beside the labor march to focus on. Yet many of the young people who came out later in the day (surely they count as "citi-

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zens") came out because of the unusual energy and the combination of groups and strategies. As for the rest of Middle America, those who would have otherwise supported the demonstration supported it anyway and were able to tell the different groups apart. Those who were repulsed, like Thomas Friedman, were repulsed by the whole thing—the audacity of all those non-experts who had thoughts, feelings, and arguments about the WTO. The media in fact did a better job than usual; in papers I looked at from Chicago, California, Washington, and New York, many of the articles made a point of separating the different messages. Finally, Glenn admits that property destruction may have been effective in the "short term" in influencing politicians and WTO delegates. Aren't these some of the same people we must reach for any long-term change?

Seattle seems more of a positive example than a wash, but—if possible—let's put it aside for a moment. There's been enough focus on those few hours of property destruction. They represent only one example of a larger argument about how to widen and reinvigorate political movements.

GLENN ARGUES that if property is going to be destroyed in the service of progressive causes, the agitators should follow his three commandments: try other means first, connect to broader social movements, and do their time in jail. The first two I agree with wholeheartedly. Of course the overall goal is social transformation; if this can be achieved by orchestrated or non-orchestrated protests without property destruction, then I am all for it. But historically, property destruction has often come about after these methods have been tried and failed.

As for the second, this is the crux of my argument. To be both ethically and strategically successful, any vanguard movement needs to be linked to a broad-based coalition. Is it possible to integrate the energy and emotion of property destruction into a larger movement? This is the question I wish Glenn had addressed, as opposed to simply stating the requirement, noting the well-worn example of the Weathermen, and moving on.

It's on the third commandment that I think Glenn and I differ in principle. Jail is a common consequence of protest, whether sitting in the street, tagging walls, or breaking windows. There is value in being *willing* to go to jail for one's beliefs, and incarceration has created amazing solidarity among political groups. But to believe people *should* go to jail, should, in fact, walk into the police station on their own, reflects the blurred morality I am writing against. There are the immediate issues of race and gender: most women and people of color of any gender wouldn't conceive of wandering into the precinct and offering themselves up for a political "crime" as a real or safe option. I don't think that jail is one of the "basic norms of civilization." The system doesn't treat the frat boy, the political protester, and the racist skinhead equally (a number of statistics back this up, most chillingly that 80 percent of those on death row are people of color), and I don't share Glenn's faith that because it should, we can safely act as though it will. Nor am I convinced that the ACLU (already overworked and my dues long spent) will be able to free me without harm and that it will be worth its time and effort. If what Glenn is alluding to is some sense of responsibility, then I agree, but that has to be a responsibility to the community and the movement. I don't believe that this can be linked to an acceptance of imprisonment under the current system as just punishment for one's actions.

No violence is "cheap," and to equate the assaults of a racist skinhead with the dismantling of a Nike sign raises important questions about how we value corporate property on the same scale with human life. The focus on rock-throwing and its legalities is a reduction of the questions raised in Seattle. Glenn is perhaps thinking too literally. The rock-throwing I am arguing for is as much metaphorical as physical; what's behind it is the need to stir things up. If we are going to be effective, we need to be shaken out of our progressive stupor. The challenge is to think carefully about all the possible strategies, whether they be crickets or crowbars, at our disposal. My hope is that the many ideas and strategies generated by Seattle will begin to coalesce into a larger, more diverse, and, ultimately, more successful movement. ●

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Film and the Inner City

Leonard Quart and William Kornblum

THE INNER CITY as a character, not as mere background, became in the 1990s one of the staples of American film. For more than a decade, independent and studio directors dramatized the most convulsive, violent, and self-destructive inner-city lives. They are what fit best into the uncomplicated conventions of action melodrama. The films confirmed for suburban filmgoers their images of an inner city permeated with burnt-out, graffiti-scarred tenements and concrete-block housing projects, and their fears of feral drug dealers and wasted addicts. Even as abandoned swaths of the South Bronx and Brooklyn were being filled in with modest private homes and garden apartments, most often through the efforts of community organizations and church groups, film crews continued to scout locations in the most sensationally blighted of inner-city streets.

Some of the most talented directors of inner-city films have, nonetheless, created enduring, stark, and brutally honest portraits of contemporary slum life in Chicago, Los Angeles, and especially New York. American films that broke more sharply from the conventions of inner city action melodrama include Nick Gomez's *Laws of Gravity* (1992), Darnell Martin's *I Like it Like That* (1994), and Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* (1989) and *Clockers* (1995). Rejecting facile stereotypes and conventional box office formulae, the directors captured the ethos of New York's Puerto Rican, African-American, and white working-class worlds. These films form a unique body of work comparable to some of the most socially critical and disquieting films made in Europe, like those made by English directors Ken Loach, Gary Oldman, Mike Leigh, and France's Mathieu Kassovitz.

Nick Gomez's low-budget film *Laws of Gravity* (filmed in twelve days for $38,000 and borrowing heavily from Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets*) deals with petty thieves in Brooklyn's Greenpoint. Gomez drops the neighborhood's stable Polish immigrant and second-generation population from the film, and by doing this he creates an edgier, more volatile world—devoid of families and populated by a narrow world of marginal young white men and women who hustle, shoplift, loan shark, hijack, sell guns, and hang out in a neighborhood bar. It's a seedy milieu—the characters living in squalid, claustrophobic railroad flats—but not quite a slum. The real slum in their minds is adjoining Puerto Rican Williamsburg, with its abandoned buildings and garbage-filled lots.

The film takes place in the existential present—we learn nothing about the characters' pasts or what shapes their behavior. Gomez offers no social or economic explanations or rationalizations for the world he evokes—behavior is all. What we get is a great deal of semi-improvised, naturalistic, inarticulate talk evoking a dead-end, brutal world where nothing apocalyptic occurs. There are no shoot-outs, car chases, melodrama—just a taut, tense, awkward, everyday portrait of marginal whites engaging in minor hustles to survive.

I Like it Like That is Darnell Martin's first and only film. Martin grew up in a Puerto Rican neighborhood in the Bronx—the progeny of a mixed marriage (black father/white mother)—and worked as an assistant to Spike Lee. Her feminist fable centers around vibrant, feisty Lisette (Lauren Velez), who is trapped with three kids in a marriage to dim, macho, self-centered, loving, sweet Chino (Jon Seda), a bicycle messenger.

Martin's film is shot in a cartoon-like, high decibel style. It evokes a public world of graffiti-covered murals, kids playing *salugi* on the street, and sidewalks filled with intrusive

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people and sound (rap, salsa, boogolo, and rhythm and blues). *I Like it Like That*'s focus is much less on social pain and pathology than on how constricting for the individual, especially in terms of gender identity, the milieu can be. With the arrest of Chino, Lisette (a little too conveniently) finds a work life in the larger world—achieving for the first time a sense of identity and self-esteem that the neighborhood can never offer her.

The quality of Spike Lee's work has fluctuated radically. In *Do the Right Thing* (1989), his best film so far, he made an intellectually serious, formally dynamic, and even-handed work about a number of the prime social issues facing the black community—police brutality, white racism, the irresponsibility of black men, and black hostility to Asian and white storeowners. The film successfully fused realism and stylization (primary colors, tight close-ups, jump cuts, artificial light, montages, and narration) to provide a critical kaleidoscope of black life on one Brooklyn street. Yes, it's flawed (for example, a few too many film school stylistic tics and an aggressive sexist strain) but the more one views it, the more its political complexity becomes apparent. One begins to see that it's not intellectual confusion that Lee is projecting, but surprisingly (given the body of Lee's work) a genuine sense of political ambiguity. The film avoids being polemical by asserting that there are many possible political choices, and offers Malcolm X and Martin Luther King as two alternative political visions and strategies. The choice made by Lee's conflicted protagonist, Mookie (Spike Lee), to throw a garbage can through the window of Sal's Pizzeria in the midst of a riot is not seen as a heroic act, but one that leaves him perplexed and saddened. The film's conclusion carries no answer to what it means to "do the right thing"—just more questions.

With *Clockers*, Lee made the most socially critical and evocative of the nineties' inner-city films. Superficially treated and marketed as a "hood" or "ghettocentric" film about violent gangbangers ("clockers" are minor drug dealers), it is actually a powerful lament against the violence and pathology of inner-city life.

The narrative of *Clockers* hinges on the murder of a black drug dealer and the attempt by a driven, white, homicide detective, Rocco Klein (Harvey Keitel), to get to the bottom of the case. Lee, however, is not interested in carefully shaping the film's narrative or heightening its violence and tension. *Clockers* is essentially a meditation on its protagonist, Strike (Mekhi Phifer)—a young black man who, with his cohorts, spends his life on the project benches dealing crack in retail weights to a variety of customers—urban and white suburban.

Strike himself is no abstract symbol of inner-city pathology or victimization. He is an ulcer-ridden, solitary dreamer, obsessed with model trains, but caught up in the criminal ethos that ravages life in teeming housing project neighborhoods. Strike craves a father, but the only paternal figure that he is linked to is his employer in the drug business, Rodney (Delroy Lindo)—a manipulative, quietly ominous figure who offers nothing but crime and money.

THE ABSENCE of fathers (on one level the film deals with the cycle of destruction set by fathers), white racism, and unemployment are a given in the film, but Lee does not allow any of these factors to absolve his characters of responsibility for their actions. What Lee wants us to see is that the inner city is so permeated with internecine violence that the greatest immediate danger to blacks comes from other blacks. (Death rates due to homicides have ranged between six or seven times higher than those of whites during the past fifty years, and most black criminals victimize other blacks.) Lee reinforces this perspective by intercutting mindlessly violent music videos, malt liquor ads, video games, gangsta' rap, slasher movie images, and sounds that are an integral part of the clockers' daily life.

Lee's critique is moral, not political or economic in nature. He exhorts black adolescents to purge their lives of guns, drugs, and violence, and reject the easy money and glamour of becoming a drug dealer. There is nothing intellectually new here (and if there is a political commitment it's to voluntarism, not socialism), but it is done with imagistic power—noir-style night scenes that capture the heart of the spiritual emptiness and oppression of inner-city life, and daylight scenes skillfully evoking the waste

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of intelligence that goes into the clockers' elaborate drug dealing maneuvers. The film is also so free of cant about race (no anti-white polemics) that its moral message is delivered by Rocco Klein—the emotionally exhausted, cynical white detective. He is also the one father figure, who offers—in his relentless pursuit of justice—a glimmer of hope to Strike and his protege, Tyrone.

Clockers' dirge-like vision of the inner city inherently has more of a social perspective than the other nineties' American inner-city films. Lee's view of the inner city is greater than the sum of the individuals who reside in it. It's Strike's story, but it is also a film about inner-city culture in the way the "hood" films, or even *Laws of Gravity* and *I Like it Like That* are not.

Lee's political vision is not a fully developed one. He does not explore in depth the variables that go into the shaping of inner city culture—unemployment, racism, the legacy of slavery, the absence of role models, inadequate parenting—or examine the dialectical relationship between social structure and individual behavior. *Clockers* projects a vision of inner-city entrapment that strikingly conveys what Cornel West called "the nihilistic threat" that exists in "the self-destructive and inhumane actions of black people." It's a threat posed by the profound sense of rage, self-hatred, social despair, and impotence that envelop elements of African-American society, and make communal and familial life so difficult to sustain. What should be noted is that in Lee's most recent film, *Summer of Sam*, his seventies Italian-American working-class characters may not suffer from social despair, but they are as trapped by their claustrophobic sexist and racist ethos as the clockers are by their destructive milieu.

The critique, however, has power not because of its intellectual sophistication, but as a result of Lee's gift for getting at the emotional heart of his characters' destructive behavior without ever sensationalizing or sentimentalizing it. American films, be they independent or mainstream, rarely provide an institutional context for socially charged subjects. We are more apt in films and daily life to either personalize a social or political issue or make it utterly peripheral than to explore its historical and structural basis. If a film like *I Like it Like That* lacks a political edge, it carries an implicit critique of sexism in both the inner city and in the world of record companies. However, it never goes outside Lisette's consciousness to provide an overview of the South Bronx. Social change or fragmentation naturally carries more dramatic interest for an audience when centered on the fate of an individual than on the policies or forces that helped shape the world she must confront.

Of course, there are American independent films, such as John Sayles's *City of Hope*, that construct a dialectical relationship between the decisions and fates of individual characters and the social and political context they inhabit. Sayles, however, is a rare figure among American directors—a filmmaker politically committed and sophisticated enough to make social films that eschew sloganeering for an intricate analysis of how racial and ethnic politics function in a small city. For example, one central character in *City of Hope* is an idealistic black councilmember who is committed to social change. However, he must compromise his notion of justice to gain his community's support and serve it more effectively. In essence he accepts morally suspect means so that the community can make some social gains.

Few recent films have depicted the changed climate of the American inner city in the late nineties. No film of note has appeared evoking the end of the crack epidemic, the radical decline in the crime rate, or the strengthening of the inner-city economy. Television police dramas like the racially integrated, psychologically complex *Homicide* and the long-running, more formulaic *NYPD Blue* have, despite the decline of crime, continued (adhering to the genre's demands) to depict the inner city as threatened by continuous mayhem. In fact, *NYPD Blue* is set in a nineties East Village that seems never to have gone through gentrification. Obviously, in these programs the emphasis is less on social texture and change in the inner city than on the character and emotional life of the individual detectives, and their solving of a variety of violent crimes.

However, there are films like David Riker's

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Ana (Silvia Goiz) in the "Seamstress" episode of *La Ciudad*. Photo by Victor Sira.

elegantly composed, Rossellini-like *La Ciudad* (*The City*, 1999), which deals with Hispanic immigrants in New York who face exploitation, alienation, and poverty. *The City*'s cast is made up mostly of non-actors—immigrants who have experienced variations of their characters' painful lives. The film at times seems to strain for the poetic and poignant. But Riker's montages of immigrant faces in all their dignity, exhaustion, and melancholy remind one of Walker Evans's indelible photographs of tenant farmers and sharecroppers in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*.

This is Riker's first fictional film, and he brings to it a documentarian's need for authenticity, coupled with a desire to capture through powerful images the immigrants' sense of dislocation and oppression. Riker is a political filmmaker, but not one who subordinates his characters in the effort to make political points. He conveys the harshness of the immigrants' work lives (sweatshops, casual day labor) and suggests the need for a solidarity that the immigrants can only tenuously affirm. These are not political heroes, for they struggle too hard with the immediacy of economic survival to contemplate confronting the institutions that use and abuse them.

Considering the nature of most films dealing with the inner city, Riker, however, has uniquely constructed a portrait of people who enact a sense of responsibility and loyalty, and avoid savaging each other or destroying themselves. Of course, he's probably almost as selective in the characters he focuses on as Hollywood filmmakers who make gangbangers their inner-city representatives. Still, it's good to see a film about inner-city life where drugs, guns, and mindless violence are not at its center.

The European inner-city films are darker and, often, more politically conscious than most of their American counterparts. Mathieu Kassovitz's *Hate* won the Best Director's prize at Cannes in 1995 and was a popular and critical hit in France. It's a film inspired by both Spike Lee and Martin Scorsese and centers around three central characters. Uncontrolled, sociopathic Vinz is Jewish; fast-talking Said is North African; and the most articulate and in-

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trospective, Hubert, is African—an ethnic mixture whose solidarity reinforces the film's anti-police message. They all live in a *banlieu* (a working-class suburb on the periphery of Paris) in a self-enclosed, sterile housing project, whose salient characteristics are vast empty spaces, ubiquitous graffiti, and groups of young men aimlessly hanging about.

The film's lost characters use American inner-city neighborhood slang ("chill," "asshole," "fucker"), listen to rap music, and watch *Lethal Weapon*. Their lives are not much different than those of their American counterparts—random brawling, drug taking and dealing, petty criminality, and permanent unemployment. What basically differentiates their world from the one in *Clockers* is the racial mixture of people on the estate, and the fetishizing of the gun in a society where guns aren't commmonplace.

Hate is an angry, stylized, overly revved-up film. It uses restless camera movements, zooms, point-of-view shots, and some documentary footage of young project inhabitants battling the police. It is structured around twenty-four hours in the lives of the three young men, in the aftermath of a riot against the police, who are the film's primary villains. The police in both the *banlieu* and Paris are brutal, sadistic, and racist, and are seen as the primary enemy (a rap song, "Fuck the Police," blasted by a local DJ echoes their sentiments). The few police that are in any way sympathetic are powerless to affect their colleagues' behavior.

Nothing works for the three protagonists. They spend the day drifting around the project—joking and getting into conflicts with the police. They head for Paris, a city whose sophistication and wealth make them extremely uneasy. They fail to get money that's owed them, are incapable of pulling off a credit card swindle or stealing a car, and impotently try to pick up women at an art opening, where their self-defeating behavior gets them thrown out. They are without options or hope, their only defense black humor. When an old Jewish man tells them a tale that should have meaning for them—about a Gulag deportation train and the price paid by a friend who resists a Soviet guard's orders—they dismiss it as ridiculous.

Kassovitz ends *Hate* on a bleaker note than Lee's *Clockers*. Where Lee grafted a contrived, hopeful note of Strike heading toward gleaming sunlight and the western prairies, Kassovitz gives us a stand-off—Hubert and a cop drawing guns on each other at close range. *Hate* is about a society collapsing on its urban margins without a touch of hope in the offing.

OTHER EUROPEAN inner-city films like actor Gary Oldman's auspicious film debut *Nil by Mouth* (1995) are just as pessimistic. Oldman is influenced by Ken Loach films about nineties' inner-city life (*Raining Stones*, *Riff-Raff* and *Ladybird, Ladybird*), but without their political and social agenda. Like Oldman's work, Loach's inner-city films depict unemployment, domestic violence, and drug addiction as an integral part of his characters' lives. But his characters are generally decent, sympathetic people whose personal flaws and limitations are seen as a much less significant determinant of their fates than the character of English institutions and society. It's the institutions and capitalist system that are the real villains for Loach

Loach is a Marxist who views English society through the prism of class difference and conflict. For Loach the possibility for social change rests with a rank-and-file movement of the working class that he sees as usually being betrayed by the traditional left—be it the Communist Party in Spain during the Civil War or the Labour Party in England. He wants his films to move audiences to new ways of looking at their society and to commit themselves to social and political action.

Nil by Mouth, in turn, is a semi-autobiographical work about a white, South London dysfunctional family where almost everybody is permanently unemployed and lives on the dole. In addition, the men have spent a great deal of their lives in prison. The film offers no hymn to the human spirit or political or social explanations for the family's situation, but treats their criminal, unredeemable lives as solely a product of their own behavior.

Oldman grew up in South London, so he knows the look and vernacular (harsh, expletive-filled talk hard for an American audience to decipher) and avoids any hint of artifice or

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caricature in depicting the milieu. The film begins in a working-class pub with its garrulous, alcoholic, brutal central figure, Ray, sitting at a table with his loyal stooge, Mark, exchanging stories about orgies and planning a scam. The women of Ray's family, his beaten-down wife, Val, her mother, Janet, who is the only character who holds a job, and Val's grandmother, Kath, inhabit a separate, more stable and caring world. They sit apart from the men in the pub, their relations with them dominated by a need either to fend off their violence or pick up the broken pieces after the men, who treat the women like dogs, commit one self-destructive and destructive act after another. Still, the women provide a network of support for each other, and have a capacity for hope and kindness that the men lack.

Nil by Mouth may have the feel of a documentary, but from Eric Clapton's vivid bluesy score to the probing close-ups that get inside its characters, this is a carefully crafted and detailed realist film that is never visually dull. Oldman has chosen neither to sentimentalize, judge, nor patronize these members of London's marginal working class, whom he knows so intimately. He also feels no need to mention the destructiveness of Thatcher and Tory economic policies to provide a social context. Other English directors dealing with urban working-class life, like Frears, Leigh, and Loach—despite their political differences—make reference to Thatcher's callous contempt for the working class and treat her as a villain who helped usher in an era exulting in entrepreneurial greed. However, for Oldman, "People are politics, it's not the other way around." He simply observes his characters with a clear-eyed view that sticks to what is true, serving no larger moral, political, or social purpose. What *Nil by Mouth* grants an audience is an unsparing look into a world so particularized and real that all sociological paradigms and political abstractions about this marginal class's ethos seem beside the point.

Films like *Nil By Mouth*, *Clockers*, and *Hate* don't offer the final word on life in the inner city, but all of them avoid reducing their characters to either social victims or monsters. Some of the characters commit horrific acts, but they are humanized to a point that they can't be seen as mere strutting inner-city stereotypes out of rap music videos or action melodramas. The films also refuse to explain away or absolve them of responsibility for their behavior. However relentlessly pernicious inner-city life can be, the characters are not innocents, but people who collaborate with what is worst in their world.

RECENT EUROPEAN films about the fate of urban immigrants and migrants, like those by the Dardenne brothers of Belgium, situate their action in the drab industrial squalor of bleak neighborhoods squeezed between automobile expressways and metropolitan rail corridors. Like Loach's film *Riff Raff*, the Dardennes depict a racially and ethnically heterogeneous working class that is viciously exploited in illegal and semi-legal forms of casual labor. Both Dardenne films, *La Promesse* and *Rosetta*, have been highly acclaimed in Europe, with *Rosetta* winning top prize at the 1999 Cannes Festival. The crux of the narrative revolves around Rosetta's wary friendship with a resourcefully good-humored young man her own age who works (off the books) at a nearby waffle stand, and whose job she fiercely covets. Her mother's severe alcoholism, Rosetta's almost feral efforts to scrape up the necessities of life, and the wrenching betrayal at the film's dramatic center, make it an extremely unsettling work. It's clearly what the Dardennes aimed to achieve. At its conclusion, however, without a tinge of sentimentality, the film affirms the power of human connection and love.

La Promesse centers around fifteen-year old Igor's ethical crisis (played faultlessly by a teenager of almost disconcerting beauty and with no prior film experience), who helps his father in a shady labor racket that exploits illegal immigrants. Igor's crisis is set off when an African worker dies on the job largely through his father's cruel negligence. He then becomes enmeshed in efforts to protect his father while attempting to help the immigrant's widow and child.

The film's action takes place in Seraing, the industrial suburb of Liege where the Dardennes grew up, and where the closing of a number of major factories produced a staggering 30 per-

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cent unemployment rate. In a number of interviews following the film's release, the Dardenne brothers spoke passionately about the social dynamite created in many parts of industrial Northern Europe by high unemployment levels combined with rapid immigration from Africa and Southern Europe. *La Promesse* never becomes a social tract because the film so brilliantly depicts the subtleties of the father-son relationship, and in its powerful final sequences, the even more nuanced realtionship between the boy and the African widow.

In all these films the city is never just a photogenic, elegantly composed background where the characters interact or the narrative action evolves, but another significant character whose weather, space, light, architecture, and social conditions reflect and help shape the behavior of the people who inhabit it. But there are some revealing differences among them. In *Hate*, when the action moves through historic Paris, the viewer begins to become more connected to the characters' marginality. In the New York films, Manhattan's office towers are a psychologically distant backdrop that still offer the constant fantasy of escape, and situate the action in the familiar geography of success and failure. In contrast, the characters in the Dardennes' films have no connection to historic urban Europe. Their world is unrelieved by even momentary physical escape into those elegant, privileged streets, making their potential success as human beings even more powerful. On the other hand, as in the films of Loach, Kassovitz, and Oldman, for the brothers Dardenne there is no possible alternate world, no ticket to a bus "out West."

The newer European and American films dealing with immigrants and marginalized working-class characters move us away from the notion of the "inner city" as a ghetto with invisible walls or an insensate world permeated with tabloid violence. The urban industrial environment of those at the bottom of society is represented as increasingly diverse but as physically and socially bleak, no matter how remote from the city's center. A number of the films do take place in public housing projects, and the directors convey the mean sterility and oppressiveness of their cityscapes. The London project or council estate, melancholy and empty of people, the French and American ones filled with young men dealing drugs or aimlessly hanging out on its roofs, basements, hallways, and benches. The project's putative park-like space is turned into a threatening and uncontrolled setting. There are also the night streets—often rain swept—and the strip

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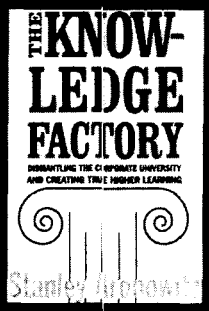
clubs, pubs, fast-food restaurants, boxing arenas in which characters meet and take refuge. However, looking at American "inner-city" films and more recent European films, one perceives that, over time, it's class rather than race that ultimately defines the lives of urban poor people throughout the industrial world.

There are countless other films to be made about inner-city life that get at its contradictions and complexity, and refuse to romanticize, cynically use, or degrade the lives and world they depict. The films we have discussed depict lower-class city life with a greater fidelity to what is true than most media representations. The images and characters projected may only be a powerful fragment of a richly textured neighborhood world that no one fictional film can encompass, but they do reverberate in ways that force us to think and feel about marginalized urban people in more intricate and less reflexive ways. ●

LEONARD QUART is professor of cinema studies at the College of Staten Island and at the City University Graduate Center (CUNY). WILLIAM KORNBLUM is an editor of *Dissent* and professor of sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center. Portions of this essay appeared in different form in *Cinéaste*, Vo. XXII, No. 1, "Spike Lee's *Clockers*: A Lament for the Urban Ghetto," and in a review of *Nil by Mouth*, *Cinéaste*, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, both by Leonard Quart.



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Four Walls Eight Windows, 1999 280 pp. $23.95

ABOVE ALL, keep it short. The message must be brisk, colorful, and to the point. Just say it and get off. Anyone unfamiliar with the insistent pace of American television production encounters it as soon as the camera's red light switches on. "Can you tell us, Professor, what parents need to be aware of as their children log onto the Internet?" The anchorwoman smiles and leans forward as if expecting an informative reply.

"Well, there are three things to keep in mind. First, it's important to remember that none of these changes takes place in a vacuum . . . ."

A look of irritation flashes across the interviewer's face. What? Three points? Broader context? Still smiling, she bobs her eyebrows up and down as if to say: come on, come on, let's get this over with. In the middle of my second point she finally interrupts. "Thank you for that interesting overview of some developments that are transforming our schools. Now, let's go to Ed who has breaking news on that storm blowing in from the Great Lakes."

Within the crackling impatience that defines contemporary television, the specific category of performance no longer matters. Headline news, MTV, sitcoms, talk shows, sports events, and high-toned commentaries like the PBS *NewsHour*—all move to the frenetic pitch. No special consideration is allowed philosophers and scholars asked to address weighty matters of public affairs; they too are expected to deliver well-rehearsed zingers as the video frame moves from one morsel of excitement to the next. After a time, even those who ought to know better, who understand why such speed and brevity are insidious, yield to these demands as clever spin becomes the essence of argument. When I asked a Washington, D.C.-based peace activist recently what I should teach my students about the arms control debate, I expected him to suggest studying negotiations between the nuclear powers and the developing countries. Instead he advised, "You must teach them how to deliver an effective, eight-second sound bite."

The forces that impose this bizarre mode of "communication" are by this point well understood. Aware that viewers fidget with remote controls at the ready, broadcasters reward continued watching with recurring bursts of stimulation—comedy punch lines accompanied by bursts from the laugh track; rapidly morphing images of hip-hop performers; sports figures hurtling through simulated *Star Trek* explosions; talk-show pundits pummeling each other with one-liners and insults. As long as the energy level is high and focus rapidly shifting, all of us are lured away from the yawning void, the pit of TV horror—viewer boredom. Policing the realm is, of course, the ratings system that delivers swift punishment to producers who guess wrong about what viewers will endure.

Advertisers, similarly, have learned that anything of significance about their products can be squeezed into a few well-chosen images, words and sounds. A thirty-second commercial is more than enough time to handle the job. These days what works best is a faint hint that the beer, automobile, or fast food vaguely evident in the background is synonymous with a cool, sexy lifestyle. The success of such methods in selling Coke and Pepsi was long ago embraced by managers of political

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campaigns. Quips in vogue at the moment—"Drop the Chalupa" and "I believe in compassionate conservatism"—are pitched at exactly the same level: mindless, pleasant, and (for reasons you can't quite put your finger on) vaguely appealing. Both repel close scrutiny. Who would be so boorish as to ask what's in Taco Bell's "chalupa" anyhow or what makes George W. Bush's policies "compassionate"? Enigmatic blather makes great TV.

An irony that accompanies the dumbing down of political speech in the age of video is that as the situation has deteriorated, scholarly analysis of it has greatly improved. Three decades after Newton Minow declared television a "vast wasteland," dozens of wonderful books are busily mapping exactly how vast it's become. Ben Bagdikian and Mark Crispin Miller have documented the increasing concentration of ownership among the corporations that imposes a sterile uniformity on what we read, hear, and watch. Robert McChesney has amplified these concerns, noting that the Internet is the obvious next target for takeover.

A host of critics, Jerry Mander and Mary Winn most notably, have decried the personal addictions and social obsessions that electronic media spawn as audiences gorge on "the plug-in drug." Neal Postman and Danny Schechter have taken perverse delight in showing how news and political discussion have been absorbed within increasingly banal genres of entertainment. Offering an insider's view of the scene, James Fallows has exposed the dirty little secrets of Washington pundits who trample standards of journalism in the quest for personal wealth and stardom. As commentaries of this kind proliferate, it now seems there's enough good material about television and the corruption of American politics to fill a twenty-four-hour-a-day cable television channel. In fact, I'm surprised no entrepreneur has taken up the challenge.

To the rising stack of jeremiads, Jeffrey Scheuer contributes an insightful but profoundly unsettling volume. Scheuer does not agonize over the burgeoning oligopolies in publishing and the electronic media, although he's clearly aware of that trend. Neither does he stress the corruption of politicians by their endless scramble to raise funds for TV campaign ads, although he understands it full well. Closer to Ellul and Mander than to today's left-wing political economists, Scheuer insists that there is something in the very essence of television that makes it insidious for democracy. In his view the rise of television during the past generation and the "collapse of American liberalism in the face of a resurgent New Right" are actually one and the same unhappy development. Rather than pretend that all voices in the political spectrum can employ the tube for their best purposes, Scheuer suggests that progressives own up to a baleful predicament—that television is fundamentally a right-wing medium.

The basic tension that informs *The Sound Bite Society* is a contrast between simplicity and complexity. In its very mode of operation and its way of catching the attention of viewers, television prefers uncomplicated forms of expression. Sharp either/or choices, photogenic personalities, memorable quips, and stark contrasts between "good" and "evil" are convenient for a medium in which immediate impact is all that matters. Scheuer maintains that conservative viewpoints are bound to be favored in such settings because they depend upon packaging the world in facile, divisive categories. Stressing the virtues of individualism, old-fashioned family values, the magic of the market, and the hideous evils of government, conservative speakers offer solace to those in retreat from the trouble and confusion of modern life. In the bombastic slogans and beguiling imagery of the right, viewers find the scapegoats and easy remedies they crave.

Scheuer recognizes that liberals frequently traffic in the same kinds of simplification and distortion he deplores. He also admits that conservatives are sometimes capable of offering complicated, nuanced political philosophies. But he contends that, at bottom, a progressive understanding of society and its problems is bound to be more aware of interdependencies, ambiguities, and contradictory social possibilities than the crude characterizations that conservative ideologists prefer.

The progressive worldview, he notes, envisions "a more connected, integrated, and sys-

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tematic understanding of social relationships." "Individuals are seen not as billiard balls, but as fibers in that social fabric of individuals, groups, communities, institutions, nations, ideas, and broader social and economic forces, sharing common histories and destinies." Those who acknowledge the realities of social life in this way are confronted with ambiguous situations and webs of knotty choices. Alas, an awareness of this kind handcuffs the democratic left in the reductionist slugfests that make for riveting TV. Thus, a liberal may decide to crow vapid slogans just as loudly as the other popinjays on the *McLaughlin Group*, but the shrillness will inevitably seem phony, betraying any grasp of social justice, respect for crucial human differences, or recognition of the intricacies of particular policies. "In sum," Scheuer argues, "what is simple, fragmented, short-term or localized plays well on the tube; what is compound, integrated, long-term, or general, does not." Much of the richness of the book comes in its exploration of the many ways in which this predicament within political speech and, indeed, political culture plays itself out. The sound bite society is one in which politicians choose flash over substance, citizens retreat into cynicism and regard for crucial issues deteriorates.

Scheuer's description of today's communications pathologies seems entirely valid. Less persuasive, however, is his diagnosis, which places blame solely upon television and its effects. It's worth remembering that the most pungent and enduring models for the kinds of electronic images and political rhetoric Scheuer deplores were perfected long before the coming of television, in the films and radio of Joseph Goebbels and other totalitarian propagandists. Long before that, of course, the derisive slogans of yellow journalism had become familiar toxins in American newspapers and magazines. Today, the penchant for dumbed-down, embittered political speech is, if anything, most prominent on the AM radio dial, as music programming and listeners have migrated to FM, leaving a vacuum that conservative demagogues and their sponsors have eagerly filled. Even a new medium recently upheld as the next great arena for social justice and deliberative democracy—the Internet—is to an increasing extent the province of wealthy computer users with a preference for conservative and libertarian bile. As one surveys the wider dimensions of the problem, it is perplexing to find television featured as the primary villain.

Seen as a matter of political communications in general, the crucial questions have less to do with the peculiarities of any particular medium than with the control of communication channels of all kinds, especially how the rules governing access and use are established. In the United States it has long been common practice to develop means of communications in ways that at first seem well connected to broader notions of the public good, but soon to deliver them into the hands of commercial, profit-seeking enterprise. Through the decades, those who make public policy have been willing to relinquish the public's stake in the airways (and now the Internet) because, it is believed, the corporate sector knows best how to build and manage society's communications facilities. The sheer folly of simply giving away the enormous wealth of electronic resources is bad enough. But its ills are compounded by the effects this policy has in limiting possibilities for common access to new media in the arts, education, and public affairs. Hence, it is hardly surprising to find that a society that has systematically shackled the ability of citizens to use the tools of electronic speech should have a shriveled, distorted public sphere.

Indeed, Scheuer's own definition of "television" is so broad as to encompass criticisms of exactly this kind. He recognizes, for example, that television is not just the equipment and human organization of video broadcasting, but the whole nexus of corporate power and pervasive commercialism that determines what viewers see. At the same time, Scheuer often writes about "television" as if it were a juggernaut, a cultural essence that arrives as an irresistible force. It no longer seems thinkable to him that the various strands of economics, electronics, advertising, public relations, production styles, Hollywood mentalities, and the like might somehow be disentangled to reveal possibilities for communications of a different kind.

My own tendency to regard television as a univocal, deterministic power was considerably

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diminished during years in which I lived in Western Europe and witnessed institutions of social democracy still strong enough to resist total commercial saturation. Under such circumstances, television included opportunities for uninterrupted theatrical productions, imaginative investigative journalism, and events where extended public deliberation and debate took place. Several years ago, for example, I happened to be in Oslo during a time when one of the television channels devoted several hours a night to coverage of a Norwegian consensus conference, a panel of ordinary citizens brought together to examine policy questions about biotechnology. By U.S. standards this was an insane way to invest perfectly good "prime time." In fact, I myself grew impatient watching Norwegians debate the jumble of issues hour after hour. (I'm an American, after all, and want the key points to be summarized in less than a minute.)

What the experience revealed, however, is that the act of televising words and pictures over great distances is not necessarily antithetical to democratic expression. A key question, then, is whether a society has the mettle needed to set aside a broad cultural domain, one in which advertising and other market forces are limited in influence and in which the activities of civic culture are nurtured. A consensus for preserving space of that kind, never very strong in the United States, has all but vanished in the Reagan/Bush and (alas) Clinton eras, as the market has been embraced as the sole arbiter of social priorities.

Struggling with this problem, the book ends with several ambitious, if unlikely, proposals for reform. The Supreme Court must overturn its decision in *Buckley v. Valeo*, which designates money for campaign contributions as equivalent to free speech. The Telecommunications Act of 1996, one that opened the door for the current wave of telecom megamergers, must be repealed. Existing antitrust laws should be enforced and new ones passed to limit the ownership of broadcast licenses. The "failed and commercialized public television system" should be replaced with a new system of public communications, one that would afford greater diversity and public access. Above all, Scheuer recommends, we need to restore opportunities in education, the media, and elsewhere for "the critical spirit" to flourish among citizens.

BUT WHERE to begin? As is true for many who write on television and politics, Scheuer tends to paint himself into a corner. The power of the tube seems so pervasive, so overwhelming, that only a massive power failure lasting several weeks could reacquaint people with political realities unmediated by electronic imagery. A ray of hope, in my view, can be found in the very fact that rapidly advancing innovations in media leave in their wake a host of "outmoded" but entirely adequate venues for communications. Those who care about democratic inclusion and social justice would do well to study possibilities in what appear to be realms of obsolescence, places where less than state-of-the-art technologies are sometimes accessible at low cost and with few institutional restrictions. Examples can be found in hundreds of college/community radio stations that dot the country (at least the ones that are not mere broadcast towers for the pallid programming of National Public Radio). Here one often finds lively channels for news, commentary, discussion, debate, and artistic performance, ones closely connected to the concerns, issues, and talents of everyday life.

Additional possibilities have been made available by a recent Federal Communications Commission decision that opens up nearly a thousand low-power FM channels to local community groups, a step resisted by commercial broadcasters because "it would interfere" with their stations. Perhaps even the beleaguered Internet still holds some promise, although it is increasingly packaged as a set of brand name portals through which infotainment and shopping flow. If people in substantial numbers reject the push for media mummification, the Internet might still develop as a space of communities rather than of commodities.

As headlines on the business page make clear, the sound bite society is rapidly moving to a new stage. Television as it has existed for the past half century is giving way to a hybrid of high-definition television, computer networking, and a host of competing digital formats. The enormous media conglomerates know exactly

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what they want from this transformation: unprecedented profits from the deregulated sphere that combines local and long distance telephone, cable television, and lucrative Internet services. But what will Americans as citizens demand from all the new media other than greater bandwidth and more consumer choices? That enormously important question awaits widespread attention, study, and debate. ●

LANGDON WINNER teaches in the Department of Science and Technology Studies at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He is the author of *The Whale and the Reactor.*

Inconvenient Facts

Aryeh Neier

THE NEW MILITARY HUMANISM:
LESSONS FROM KOSOVO
by Noam Chomsky
Common Courage Press, 1999, 199 pp $15.95

EARLY IN Noam Chomsky's diatribe against NATO's military intervention in Kosovo, he cites George Orwell's preface to *Animal Farm*. Orwell discussed the way that "unpopular ideas can be silenced, and inconvenient facts kept dark, without any need for any official ban" by a "general tacit agreement that it wouldn't do to mention that particular fact." Chomsky is intent on challenging the claim that NATO acted in Kosovo to protect human rights by bringing to light inconvenient facts.

According to Chomsky, the real reasons for the twelve-week, spring 1999 bombing campaign in Kosovo and Serbia proper were conventional. First and foremost, he argues, the purpose was to sustain NATO's status in the post-cold war era. Secondarily, the bombing was undertaken to complete Washington's "substantial takeover of Europe" and to stimulate defense spending.

Whatever one thinks of Chomsky's analysis of the rationale for the war, he does call attention to some inconvenient facts. The most significant, I believe, is a provision of the Rambouillet Peace Agreement that, he says, was unreported by the American media either in advance of March 24 when the bombing began or, indeed, while the war was underway. This was paragraph 8 of Annex B, which provided that

> NATO personnel shall enjoy, together with their vehicles, vessels, aircraft, and equipment, free and unrestricted passage and unimpeded access throughout the FRY [Federal Republic of Yugoslavia] including associated airspace and territorial waters. This shall include, but not be limited to, the right of bivouac, maneuver, billet, and utilization of any area or facilities as required for support, training and operations.

Chomsky says that in "the massive US coverage of the war" he found "no report of those terms that was near accurate...." I think he is right. Though I did no search of the literature, I did pay close attention to accounts of the Rambouillet negotiations in three daily newspapers and recall no discussion of this passage. In fact, when I learned about it from some of the materials emanating from Belgrade during the war, I was skeptical, imagining that this was misinformation disseminated by the Milosevic regime. The omission was probably not as crucial as Chomsky believes. Milosevic's spokespersons were interviewed frequently in that period on CNN and on other broadcast media. I don't recall any of them saying that the reason they would not sign at Rambouillet was that the proposed agreement gave NATO free

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access to all of Yugoslavia. It was NATO's occupation of Kosovo and the prospect that this would lead to the separation of the territory from Serbia that concerned them. Yet that doesn't excuse the governments that sponsored the Rambouillet talks, the negotiators, or the media that covered the negotiations for failing to call attention to a provision of the agreement that intruded on the sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in a manner that seems to go well beyond what was necessary to protect the Kosovar Albanians.

Another inconvenient fact Chomsky brings to light is the contradictory information on whether NATO leaders knew in advance that bombing would lead to a sharp intensification of Serb attacks on the Kosovar Albanians. On the one hand, it has seemed important to Western leaders to stress that plans for the forcible expulsion of some eight hundred thousand Albanians were well underway before the bombing began. This supports their claim that they acted to stop ethnic cleansing. On the other hand, they need to explain their unreadiness to cope with the crisis caused by the rapid expulsion of such vast numbers. Some officials on some occasions said they were caught off guard.

The governmental failure was more than matched by the failure of the punditocracy to focus on this question in the period leading up to the war. Journalist and human rights researcher Samantha Power made this point as the expulsions were underway (*New Republic*, April 26 and May 3, 1999):

> In the weeks before March 24, reporters, human rights monitors, congressmen, and analysts examined just about every issue except the fate of the ethnic Albanians on whose ostensible behalf NATO would intervene. Incredibly, of the 120 Kosovo-related questions asked by reporters at State Department briefings in the three days preceding the bombing, only one related to the fate of the Kosovar Albanians, and it focused on those Albanians who might cross into neighboring countries. Of the 19 op-eds and editorials in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* in the two weeks preceding the bombings, the possibility of a bloody crackdown inside Kosovo was mentioned in just three one-line references. Our thoughts were elsewhere.

An inconvenient fact that has received some attention, but not enough, is the apparent conflict between the provisions of the United Nations Charter respecting the use of force and military intervention to protect human rights. Article 2 (4) of the charter states that "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations," and other articles reserve to the Security Council the determination that there are threats to the common interest that warrant the use of force. Yet in deciding to intervene militarily in Kosovo, the United States, Britain, and other Western governments by-passed the Security Council because they feared a veto by Russia or China. In Yugoslavia, this provided a basis to denounce the intervention as a violation of international law. The issue is also raised by Chomsky, though in less categorical terms and without the sneering tone that characterizes much of the rest of his book. Chomsky quotes Louis Henkin (of whom he writes that "In the scholarly disciplines of international affairs and international law it would be hard to find more respected voices") as pointing out that "Even 'humanitarian intervention' can too readily be used as the occasion or pretext for aggression . . . . Human rights, I believe, will have to be vindicated, and other injustices remedied, by other, peaceful means, not by opening the door to aggression and destroying the principal advance in international law, the outlawing of war and the prohibition of force."

As it happens, Henkin addressed the specific question of the intervention in Kosovo in the October 1999 edition of the *American Journal of International Law*, which probably was published too late for Chomsky to take it into account in his book. Henkin points out that "the principles of law, and the interpretation of the Charter that prohibit unilateral humanitarian intervention do not reflect a conclusion that the sovereignty of the target state stands higher in the scale of values of contemporary international society than the human rights of its inhabitants to be protected from genocide

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and massive crimes against humanity." In this connection it should be noted that the 1948 Genocide Convention, a UN-sponsored treaty ratified by 129 governments (including Yugoslavia and all members of NATO), provides that "The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to *prevent* and to punish (emphasis added)." The treaty does not restrict the duty to prevent this crime to actions authorized by the Security Council. Henkin is concerned, as is Chomsky, that claims that humanitarian intervention is required may be made in circumstances that are "ambiguous, involving uncertainties of fact and motive." The lesson of Kosovo, from Henkin's standpoint, is that there is a "compelling need to address the deficiencies in the law and practice of the UN Charter." However that need is addressed, Chomsky is surely right to argue that "there is a heavy burden of proof to meet in undertaking the threat or use of force."

ALTHOUGH THESE are important issues, Chomsky's discussion of them is almost obscured in the torrent of accusations he makes against the United States and its allies in the British government of Prime Minister Tony Blair for their sponsorship or neglect of abuses of human rights worldwide in the last half century. Chomsky's point, made particularly in a discussion of forced displacement in Colombia and of Turkish abuses against the Kurds, is that crimes comparable to or worse than those committed by Serbia in Kosovo are systematically tolerated by the United States and its allies. Therefore, Chomsky argues, concerns about human rights could not be the basis for NATO's intervention in Kosovo.

Chomsky does not accept the possibility that anyone who disagrees with him could be ethically motivated. It seems important to him, therefore, to discredit moral leaders who supported the NATO bombing. One of the most outspoken proponents was Vaclav Havel. The Czech president told the Canadian Parliament that "this is probably the first war that has not been waged in the name of 'national interests,' but rather in the name of principles and values." For this, Chomsky sets out to prove that Havel is virtually a war criminal. How? By telling us that "Havel had revealed the ethical standards that ground his insights and moral lessons ten years earlier, immediately after his fellow dissidents were brutally murdered in El Salvador, and the United States had invaded Panama, killing and destroying. To celebrate these grand events, Havel flew to Washington to address a joint session of Congress where he received a thunderous standing ovation for lauding 'the defender of freedom' that had armed and trained the murderers of the Jesuit intellectuals and tens of thousands of others." One might ask, Did Havel, in the first flush of the triumph of the Velvet Revolution, really fly to Washington to celebrate the murder of the Jesuits in El Salvador? Only in the distorted Manichean world of Noam Chomsky.

Yet the most serious flaw in Chomsky's argument lies not in his *ad hominem* attacks on Havel, Timothy Garton Ash, Elie Wiesel, and others who disagree with him, repugnant as these are, but in his systematic disregard of an inconvenient fact that undermines his argument. Concerns about human rights could not be the basis for NATO's bombing, according to Chomsky, because only some two thousand civilians were killed in Kosovo by Serb troops in the year prior to the bombing and only some two hundred thousand to three hundred thousand were forcibly displaced. As bad or worse took place in many other countries whose governments are backed by the United States. What is left out, of course, is that Kosovo was one chapter—though perhaps not the last chapter—in a decade-long military campaign against non-Serbs by the government of President Slobodan Milosevic. The Serb leader rose to power a dozen years before the Kosovo war by playing the card of nationalism and ethnic hatred against the Kosovar Albanians; he cemented his authority by unilaterally canceling their autonomy and the autonomy of another territory with a large population of non-Serbs, Vojvodina, precipitating the breakup of Yugoslavia; he launched wars in 1991 against Slovenia and Croatia; and he launched a particularly devastating war in Bosnia in 1992. The last of these alone resulted in some two million refugees and two hundred thousand deaths, the great majority at the hands of forces

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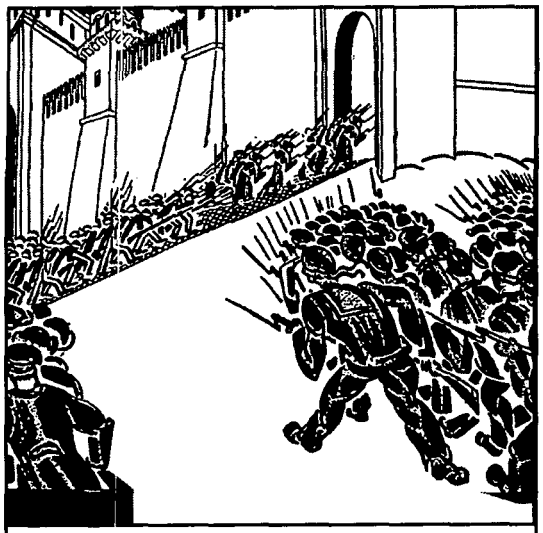
created by Milosevic. Atrocities reached genocidal proportions. That war was finally terminated by the November 1995 Dayton Peace Accords, which Milosevic accepted after, and as a direct consequence of, NATO bombing. When Milosevic launched the war in Kosovo at the end of February 1998, it was rightly seen by human rights advocates, Western governments, and NATO as the renewal of a war, and the potential renewal of genocide, in which the fundamental issues remained constant: hegemony for Serbia and the perpetuation of rule by Milosevic. It is inconceivable that Havel and other proponents of human rights would have supported NATO intervention in Kosovo were it not for this history. And it is inconceivable that the intervention would have taken place without it. Terrible things have occurred in Colombia and Turkey, and the United States may be properly denounced by Chomsky for its support for the governments responsible. But it is dishonest to argue that intervention in Kosovo was not justified by the toll in deaths and displacement in that territory without also pointing out that, after NATO sat by for more than three years before interfering decisively in Bosnia, many persons in and out of government were determined not to allow a repetition in Kosovo.

Chomsky could have acknowledged the history in ex-Yugoslavia that inspired the advocates of humanitarian intervention and still argued against NATO's bombing. But it is an inconvenient fact for his thesis, and he does not mention it. There is a strong case to be made against the way the Kosovo issue was resolved. Although Chomsky scores a few points, the case is not made in this book because he omits the main argument of those who differ with him and refuses to accept that they have any but the basest of motives. ●

ARYEH NEIER is president of the Open Society Institute and author of *War Crimes: Brutality, Genocide, Terror and the Struggle for Justice.*



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The Meritocracy Trap

Kim Phillips-Fein

THE BIG TEST: THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN MERITOCRACY
by Nicholas Lemann,
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999 368 pp $27.50

IN RESPECTABLE American opinion, perhaps the Constitution is the only institution treated with more obligatory reverence than the elite university. In a society devoted to the enthusiastic pursuit of the bottom line, the university is the exception, in theory at least; to quote Allan Bloom, it is a haven "dedicated to a higher purpose . . . not merely to shelter or manufacture or trade."

An institution so venerated must answer two questions: Who deserves to be numbered among the elect community of its members? And how can the rewards it confers be justified? Perhaps it's not surprising that entrance into this privileged world should be contingent on a test thought to measure the elusive, intangible quality of "aptitude," not ability, an exam invested with the mystic power to cut through the vagaries of birth, place, status, and parentage to measure innate capacity for learning.

How the United States came to use such oblique methods for assigning slots in college—and how elite colleges themselves came to hold such an honored position in American life—is the subject of Nicholas Lemann's new book, *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy*. In the unhurried style of an essay from the old *New Yorker*, *The Big Test* tells the story of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the Educational Testing Service (ETS), the nonprofit, quasi-public agency that produces it. It's not subtitled a "secret history" for nothing; Lemann, unlike other researchers, was awarded access to the ETS archives, so much of the research is new. It's a good thing, too, because for every well-wrought phrase and interesting anecdote there is an absent argument; the book meanders through memos, letters, speeches, and interviews while remaining strangely reticent about the point of it all.

Yet among the details, Lemann does have some ideas: *The Big Test* is, on some level, an interpretation of the postwar liberal project. After World War II, according to Lemann, the real project of the influential American liberals who devised the SAT wasn't to expand the university system so more people could go to college. It was to rehabilitate the elite, which had been discredited in the Great Depression and alienated by the New Deal. In the new "meritocracy," the most intelligent would rule. Higher education would take the place of the frontier in the nineteenth century, as a realm of competition in which the fittest would rise to the top.

Lemann's story begins in the early years of the century, with the development of the intelligence quotient test (IQ), first widely used in America to assign jobs in the army during World War I. Progressive Era eugenicists produced innumerable tracts purporting to show that dark-skinned people have lower IQs than light-skinned people, and thus deserve their lot in life. Among these was the author of the first SAT, Carl Brigham, who trafficked happily in the eugenic nostrums of the day. His 1922 *A Study of American Intelligence* was a passionate argument for the restriction of immigration from the swarthy parts of Europe. Brigham recanted his racialist interpretation of IQ in the 1930s, writing, "The test movement came to this country some twenty-five or thirty years ago accompanied by one of the most glorious fallacies in the history of science, namely, that the tests measured *native intelligence* purely and sim-

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ply without training or schooling. I hope nobody believes that now. The test scores very definitely are a composite including schooling, family background, familiarity with English, and everything else . . . The *native intelligence* hypothesis is dead."

Among the liberals who brought the SAT to its present prominence as a college admissions tool, though, the "native intelligence hypothesis" was alive and well. They were not, however, overtly interested in using SAT scores to "prove" racial differences and trod down the downtrodden. Instead, their fire was turned the other way, against inherited rank and privilege. *The Big Test* opens with a description of the ETS's first president, Henry Chauncey. An assistant dean at Harvard in the late 1930s, he saw in IQ tests the secret to an ordered society. For Chauncey, the standardized examination fulfilled Alexander Hamilton's promise to reduce the role of "accident and force" in life—especially in the creation of social class. Instead of awarding wealth, power, and status to individuals because of who their parents were, tests could be used to make sure that people would end up in the social position they deserved—and to make sure that the elite was really composed of the most talented, intelligent people in society.

LEMANN SUGGESTS that the ideal of a meritocratic elite took hold during the depression, when the wealthy and powerful in America seemed entirely discredited by the crash. Instead of an upper echelon composed of rugged men who won their wealth in the marketplace, the elite during the depression seemed to consist of arrogant young men with servants, partying at Princeton while the rest of the country waited on bread lines. Institutions of higher education catered, or were thought to cater, to aristocrats, not men on the make. Elbert Hubbard, self-help guru of the early twentieth century, wrote that Andrew Carnegie gave no money to universities because "all the great and fashionable universities are given over to cigarettes, booze, bromide, and the devious ways of dalliance." At about the same time, Thorstein Veblen wrote that "A 'gentleman's college' is an establishment in which scholarship is advisedly made subordinate to genteel dissipation."

The SAT found one of its first prominent supporters in James Conant, the president of Harvard during the 1930s and 1940s, whose *raison d'être* during those years, according to Lemann, was to "depose the existing, undemocratic American elite and replace it with a new one made up of brainy, elaborately trained, public-spirited people drawn from every section and every background." Conant, who started the first merit-based scholarships in Harvard's history, believed that the United States, historically a classless society, had developed a "caste system" in the teens and twenties. In the wake of the depression, this aristocracy could become an easy target for "European radicals" in the United States. To prevent such attacks, it was essential to find a way to "reorder the 'haves and have-nots' every generation to give flux to our social order." By selecting for merit alone, without regard to background or class, the school system could be used to "wield the axe against the root of inherited privilege" and create a new frontier of equal opportunity for all. Conant was so deeply convinced that class hierarchy was the real danger facing America that he even argued the government should "confiscate (by constitutional methods) all property once a generation"—though, fortunately for Harvard's endowment, he did not pursue this idea as aggressively as he pursued the development of the SAT.

The SATs quickly expanded from Harvard to include most other Ivy League institutions. World War II provided the opportunity for Chauncey and the College Board—with Conant's support—to demonstrate that standardized SAT-type tests could be given to hundreds of thousands of students at the same time.

So what are we to make of these strange liberal defenders? Lemann's attitude toward Chauncey and Conant wavers between bewilderment and outright hostility. One moment he endorses the general principle of meritocracy, the next he mocks the hubris of liberals who think that rational organization is the salve to all social conflict. On one page, he implies that the real problem with the SAT is that it is a narrow, biased measure, which doesn't "find wisdom, or originality, or humor,

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or toughness, or empathy, or common sense, or independence, or determination—let alone moral worth." A few pages later, he suggests that the SAT *did* create a kind of meritocracy, but one that is as stratified as the society it replaced: "You can't undermine social rank by setting up an elaborate process of ranking." At one point Lemann quotes Clark Kerr: "How may the contribution of the elite be made clear to the egalitarians, and how may an aristocracy of intellect justify itself to all men?" "Good question," Lemann responds in the sardonic, tough-guy voice he affects throughout the book. But his sarcasm has no real target. Though he doesn't like the postwar liberals much, it's not clear who or what he would like better.

Lemann's confusion about meritocracy becomes more apparent as the book goes on. *The Big Test* shifts focus halfway through; the second part is based on a series of interviews with lawyers like Alice Young (an Asian-American woman) and academics like Jerome Karabel (from a working-class background) who attended elite universities in the postwar era, and who presumably are representative of the new "meritocratic" elite. In what appears, to Lemann, to be something of a contradiction, most of the men and women he interviews have been crusaders in support of affirmative action for African Americans. How could the same liberals who claimed to believe in meritocracy also favor affirmative action? Lemann suggests that postwar liberals, in their desire to create a just and "representative" elite, knew they'd have to relax their standards a little bit for blacks—but they didn't mind doing so, because creating an elite that seemed representative was more important to them than strictly meritocratic principles.

If the educational system was to be used to select society's leaders, then "one could simply bend the rules of the meritocracy for Negroes, so that they'd get a little more than they'd be entitled to simply on the basis of test scores. This would help them advance and help to integrate the new elite, thus making it better equipped to manage racial conflict in American society. Affirmative action was not a profound betrayal of the idea of meritocracy but a quick (and, its inventors assumed, temporary) fix for one of its obvious shortcomings."

But the circle could only be squared for so long. The liberal goal of meritocracy ultimately came into conflict with the goal of ensuring progress for black Americans: "Two widely held national goals, equal opportunity for all and a better deal for Negroes, were now, thanks to the completion of the national testing and statistics-keeping apparatus, explicitly, openly contradictory." It was this "direct, long-building, historic conflict between black progress and meritocracy-by-testing" which ultimately led to populist political attacks on affirmative action—and, Lemann implies, on the entire postwar liberal consensus that what mattered was creating a just elite. In Lemann's much-praised last book, *The Promised Land*, which followed a number of poor black families from the South to Chicago's housing projects, he managed to absolve the Kennedy liberals while supporting the "culture of poverty" thesis (the argument was that black families imported a dysfunctional culture from the sharecropping plantations to the inner city that proved impervious to the too-short-lived War on Poverty). *The Big Test* once again suggests that the liberal project ultimately founders on race.

In pointing to affirmative action as an insoluble contradiction for the meritocracy, Lemann fails to come to grips with the argument that affirmative action actually advances the cause of meritocracy. Affirmative action seems like a perversion of meritocracy only if you assume that the big test has done its job: that in the absence of affirmative action, privilege would be doled out on the merits—and affirmative action's smartest proponents have never believed this to be the case. Fifty years after Conant, the children of Harvard alumni are still twice as likely to get into their parents' alma mater as everyone else. If family and connections still matter—and could anyone who's ever looked for a job deny it?—then affirmative action looks more like a way of making sure that smart kids whose parents don't have fat Rolodexes get a chance.

This ellipsis on affirmative action points to the biggest blind spot in *The Big Test*: Lemann's conclusion that the meritocratic

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project was successful, and that a new elite of the intelligentsia was created in the postwar era, albeit one which "looks more and more like what it was intended to replace." It may be true that for the professional middle class, college degrees are the primary means of passing status from one generation to the next, but the real American elite propagates itself the good old-fashioned way: through inheritance. Approximately one-half to three-quarters of all personal wealth in the United States can be traced to inheritance, according to *Left Business Observer* editor Doug Henwood. Lots of wealthy kids still go to Princeton, and for them it's pretty much the four-year summer camp cum beer garden it was before the SAT. Their wealth won't come from a law practice, it'll come from Mom and Dad. Before worrying about how Clark Kerr's "elite of the intellect" warps democratic sensibilities, Lemann might ask whether they're really running the show at all.

Lemann closes his book with a stirring call to expand and improve education at all levels, pre-kindergarten through college. Denouncing the "culture of frenzy surrounding admissions" as "destructive and anti-democratic," he calls for replacing the SAT with tests demonstrating mastery of the high school curriculum, while permitting "the richest rewards of money and status" to "devolve to people only temporarily, and strictly on the basis of their performance; there would be as little lifelong tenure on the basis of youthful promise as possible." But most of all, he believes in expanding and improving schools for all: "The best and most distinctive tradition in American education is the tradition of pushing to educate more people."

All of this is dewy-eyed Deweyism, a refreshing counter to conservatives who suggest that black and Hispanic kids who need remedial classes shouldn't be in college at all. But expanded education and fairer tests won't in and of themselves create a more egalitarian or democratic society. Though he's in favor of the GI bill while they believed in the SAT, Lemann shares the postwar liberals' vision of universities as cities on a hill, which can be a light unto the nation. This ultimately limits his vision as much as it did theirs. The gap in American society he bemoans is not, fundamentally, one that has much to do with education (let alone intelligence or merit), and so it isn't one that can easily be redressed through the school system or through a better system of testing. Taxes on inheritance and wealth, fairer labor laws, and a higher minimum wage will do far more to create the democratic society he hopes for than any number of new classrooms or any new big test. ●

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KIM PHILLIPS-FEIN is a contributing editor of the *Baffler* and a writer in New York.

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Breaking Away

Joshua B. Freeman

CAPITAL MOVES: RCA'S SEVENTY-YEAR QUEST FOR CHEAP LABOR
by Jefferson Cowie
Cornell University Press, 1999 273 pp $29.95

MOST AMERICANS rarely think about the large structures of political economy. At election time, they are more likely to focus on schools, taxes, guns, crime, religion, even traffic, than monetary policy, antitrust enforcement, or labor law. In recent years, however, there has been a notable exception: the intense debate in Congress, on talk radio, and on the campaign stump over free trade. The two most galvanizing candidates of the 1990s, Ross Perot and Pat Buchanan, built their right-wing populist crusades through attacks on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the World Trade Organization. What their followers have feared—more than a flood of imports—is an accelerated relocation of jobs from the United States to Mexico and other low-wage countries.

The resonance of free-trade issues testifies to continuing jitters about the economy. A quarter-century of downsizing, factory relocations, and episodes of widespread joblessness has left Americans anxious about their ability to get and keep work, even when unemployment is at a historic low. For many workers, globalization connotes threat to their well-being and to national economic and political security, not technical or social progress. Organized labor has particular reason to worry. No problem has been more vexing for workers trying to organize and assert their rights than the mobility of capital. Time after time, when workers have built strong unions, won higher wages, or created a culture of solidarity, companies have trumped their efforts by closing factories, office complexes, and service centers and opening new ones elsewhere. Since elsewhere is more than likely to be abroad these days, union fears of job loss fuel wariness about globalization.

Globalization has an air of newness about it, but Jefferson Cowie's fine study of one corporation's repeated relocations of its manufacturing demonstrates how little is fresh in capital's use of mobility to increase profits and temper the power of labor. RCA, the giant maker of radio and then television equipment, first centered its production in a vast complex in Camden, New Jersey. To assemble consumer products, which generally require less skill to make than custom equipment for industrial or military use, the company hired young women and paid them by the piece. When in the mid-1930s the underpaid Camden workers got swept up in a national tide of unionization, RCA fiercely fought their strike for recognition, using imported thugs, pro-company workers, and cooperative local authorities to do its dirty work. Ultimately the Camden workers did win union recognition and an excellent contract. In response, RCA began dispersing its production throughout the country. By 1953, only seven hundred of what were once nearly ten thousand consumer product jobs were left in Camden, contributing to the city's severe deterioration.

A plant that RCA opened in Bloomington, Indiana, in 1940 became a replacement for Camden. By the 1960s, it employed some eight thousand workers, primarily making televisions. Again, the company hired mostly young women, whom it initially could pay less than their peers at Camden because work opportunities for women were fewer in Bloomington and organized labor was weak. Slowly, though, conditions changed, in part because of the

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company's presence. As more manufacturing jobs became available at RCA and firms that sprung up in its shadow, a labor shortage developed. Workers, growing acclimated to an industrial regime and less fearful of losing their jobs, shed their deference toward management. Three strikes at the Bloomington plant in the mid-1960s, two of them wildcats, led RCA to look once again for a way to escape militant workers and rising labor costs.

A foray to Memphis proved disastrous. The company's attempt to get a large plant up and running quickly alienated the workforce. Then came the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., fueling militancy among the plant's black workers. An eleven-week strike followed in 1970. Late that year, RCA closed the still-new plant.

By then, RCA had found another spot that had the same advantages it had sought in Bloomington and Memphis—a plentiful labor supply, friendly local officials, weak unions, and "limited industrial culture." In 1966, to counter massive unemployment along its northern border, Mexico launched the Border Industrialization Program, which suspended tariffs on raw materials and equipment for plants that re-exported their products, so that they did not compete in the internal Mexican market. In 1968, RCA opened a television factory in Ciudad Juárez, the first major U.S. corporation to take advantage of the program. Slowly but steadily, the company increased its presence in Juárez, while reducing employment in Bloomington. In 1997, RCA—by then a subsidiary of the French state-owned firm Thomson Consumer Electronics—shuttered its Indiana plant. Meanwhile, its operations in Juárez expanded to include three factories, one of which was the most technically advanced and highly automated television manufacturing facility in the world.

The maquiladora plants along the U.S.-Mexican border—with their legion of young women workers, many making expensive goods for faraway middle-class consumers, while they themselves returned each night to dusty shacks and shanties—quickly attracted the attention of scholars, journalists, and social activists, who thought they saw a new, frightening version of industrialism. But Cowie, bringing to the discussion a historical perspective, dispels the novelty of much of what occurred. For him, what distinguished the maquiladora experience from earlier instances of industrial relocation was not, primarily, its transnationalism nor the presence of young women workers new to industrial life, but the "seemingly inexhaustible abundance" of the elements firms look for in seeking new locales—cheap labor, weak industrial traditions, and divisions within organized labor. So many young women workers could be found in northern Mexico that RCA and other border employers made it a policy to systematically replace assemblers as they gained seniority, undermining solidarity and precluding the development of more combative attitudes. Yet even in Juárez, the labor market eventually tightened, worker protests began, unions gained clout, and employees began fretting that their employers would relocate to countries with lower labor costs. For Cowie, globalization, or at least the maquiladora, represents the same old story, just more of it.

Capital Moves—based impressively on research about four sites and in two languages—exemplifies the salutary effect of the revival of geography on the social sciences. Cowie's core argument—that in spite of the claimed novelty of globalization, spatial factors long have been critical to the stability of capitalist production—deserves close attention. Because companies are more mobile than workers, they can repeatedly start afresh when the experience of industrial work and tightening labor markets lead their employees to fight for more power and money. Workers are at a double disadvantage, as Cowie tells it, because the solidarities created by industrial labor tend to be localistic, rooted in particular neighborhoods, cultures, and institutions, making it difficult for them and their organizations to develop empathetic ties with the distant employees that companies are replacing them with. Managers, by Cowie's account, not workers, are the true citizens of the world.

In picking RCA to make his argument, Cowie may have chosen too good an example, a case neater than most, that leads him to be excessively schematic, even determinist. In discussing the "maturation" of worker attitudes as a step toward organized struggle,

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Cowie too readily accepts a tight link between stable community and class solidarity. Worker militancy does not arise only from a long process of proletarianization, unfolding in a fixed industrial environment. His own example of Memphis illustrates how shop floor militancy can arise quickly, influenced by events outside the workplace. In the United States, marked as it is by very high levels of geographic mobility, communities of working-class families with multigenerational roots in the immediate area probably are the exception, not the rule. They can provide favorable terrain for organized labor, but they are not a prerequisite of worker struggles.

THE RESENTFUL, even racist, attitudes that Bloomington workers had toward RCA employees in Juárez clearly distressed Cowie. Unfortunately, he does not explore the sources of what he sees as the limited horizons of the Bloomington workers, rather portraying localism and even exclusivity as inherent in the very notion of community. The story may be more complex, with residents of even fairly parochial communities like Bloomington making conscious choices about the borders of their emotional and cultural world. The working-class teenager around which the 1979 film *Breaking Away*, set in Bloomington, revolves—a film Cowie uses to illustrate class relations in the city—does not model himself on a baseball or football player or a rock-and-roll star, but on the panache of an Italian bicycle racer. At least one local kid found his way to identifying with people and ways alien to Indiana.

Cowie only briefly discusses how politics can influence the nature of solidarity and how far workers' horizons reach. One electrical-industry union, the left-wing United Electrical Workers (the group that once represented the Camden workers), has been involved in imaginative collaborations with Mexican unions, while another, the more centrist International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (which represented the Bloomington workers), has made fewer efforts to build transnational solidarity. Union leaders—or for that matter political leaders, like Perot and Buchanan—shape as well as mirror workers attitudes toward complex phenomena like globalization and multiculturalism.

Cowie situates corporate rootlessness in the very logic of capitalist production, not the greed or heartlessness of particular executives. (The Thomson CEO who closed the Bloomington plant had been a political activist on the left wing of the French Socialist Party, a point Cowie plays for irony but that might be worth deeper exploration.) Cowie does not claim that RCA's transcontinental journey has had only negative effects. Workers in both Bloomington and Juárez benefited from employment opportunities and higher wages that RCA introduced into limited labor markets. But the price for capitalist mobility has been the weakening of organized labor and whatever progressive influence it might have. Cowie's sense of the inevitability of the dynamics of capitalist labor relations imparts a pessimistic tone to this first-rate scholarly study. Even he does not seem to have too much faith in his concluding suggestion that some sort of transnational regulatory mechanism might alleviate the loss of worker power that comes from the spatial dominance of capital.

Capital Moves reiterates the importance of history for understanding current political dilemmas, showing that capital mobility—whether or not transnational—is a deep structural element of the political economy, and therefore not subject to quick fixes. But history also provides us with examples of seemingly parochial groups leaping across space and culture to build spiritual and practical solidarity, from the revolutionaries of 1848 to the anti-apartheid campaigners of the 1980s. The current wave of anti-sweatshop activism—encompassing both unionists and middle-class students—suggests that possibilities for grassroots international cooperation may be greater than evident in the RCA story Cowie tells so well. Globalization and popular solidarity may not, in the end, be incompatible. ●

JOSHUA B. FREEMAN teaches history at Queens College, CUNY. His latest book is *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor since World War II.*

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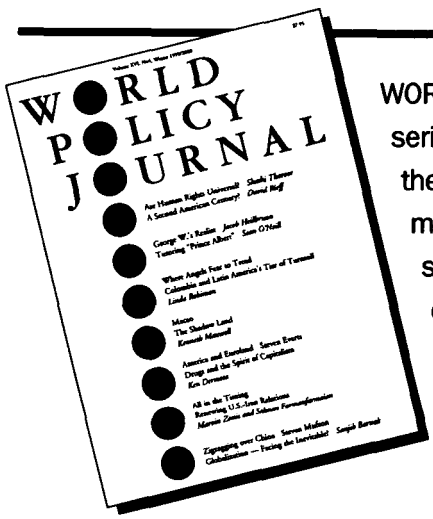

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Situated Left

Richard Wolin

THE SITUATIONIST CITY
by Simon Sadler
MIT Press, 1999 233 pp $18.95 paper

GUY DEBORD
by Anselm Jappe; translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith; foreword by T. J. Clark
University of California Press, 1999
188 pp $17.95 paper

ON NOVEMBER 30, 1994, Parisian dailies reported the suicide of Guy Debord. His death, at age sixty-two, brought to a conclusion one of the stranger episodes of postwar French politics, cinema, and letters.

In the early 1950s Debord met Romanian exile Isidore Isou, with whom he would co-found the Letterist International. Frustrated by the stagnation and immobility of postwar Europe, the Letterists sought to reenact the provocations of the interwar avant-garde in order to facilitate the renewal of culture—and, thereby, the renewal of life. Because once vibrant movements like surrealism had become canonical and thereby lost their critical edge, the Letterist watchword became "the suppression of art."

Isou had first come to Debord's attention at the 1950 Cannes festival, where the Romanian showed, to a chorus of hoots and whistles, his *Treatise on Slobber and Eternity*—a film devoid of images that consisted of dissociated monologues and smatterings of onomatopoetic poetry. The same year Isou's group had, à la the surrealists, provoked a scandal at the Notre Dame cathedral when one of their number dressed up as a priest, mounted the pulpit, and announced the death of God. Following in Isou's footsteps, in 1952 Debord showed his first film, *Howlings in Favor of Sade*. "Cinema is dead. Films are no longer possible," declared a voice during the opening sequence. "If you want, let's have a discussion." As the screen oscillated between totally blank white and black backgrounds, choice quotations and theoretical tidbits punctuated interminable stretches of silence. The audience put an end to the spectacle after twenty minutes. (Why, one wonders, did they wait so long?)

Although Debord is probably best known as the co-founder of the Situationist International, during the 1950s he was an animating presence among a number of innovative and prophetic avant-garde cultural groupings such as *Potlatch* (a Letterist journal) and the Imaginist Bauhaus. Drawing upon a pan-European constituency, these groups took critical aim at the disasters wrought by commodification, technology, urban planning, and the architectural brutality of the International Style. In the course of their experimental sketches and musings, Debord and his colleagues—Ivan Ctcheglov, Gil Wolman, Michele Bernstein (Debord's wife), the architectural futurist Constant, and the Danish painter Asger Jorn—developed a radical interpretation of the modern metropolis. This interpretation, its origins and implications for contemporary urban space, are at the heart of Simon Sadler's timely and insightful study, *The Situationist City*.

An important point of departure for Letterist-Situationist thought was the prominence of capitalist-driven consumerism in French postwar society and the concomitant surrender of the capacity for qualitative (that is, non-commodified) experience. Their texts bear comparison with kindred American works of cultural criticism during the postwar period by Paul Goodman (*Growing Up Absurd*), John Kenneth Galbraith (*The Affluent Society*), and Jane Jacobs (*The Death and Life of Great American Cities*). In a prescient 1953 text, Ctcheglov outlined the Letterist approach to urbanism:

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> A mental disease has swept the planet: banalization. Everyone is hypnotized by production and conveniences—sewage system, elevator, bathroom, washing machine. This state of affairs, arising out of a struggle against poverty, has overshot its ultimate goal—the liberation of man from cares—and become an obsessive image hanging over the present. Presented with the alternative of love or a garbage disposal unit, young people of all countries have chosen the garbage disposal unit. It has become essential to bring about a complete spiritual transformation by bringing to light forgotten desires and by creating entirely new ones. And by creating an intensive propaganda in favor of these desires.

The practice of *dérive* or drifting, developed jointly by Ctcheglov and Debord during the 1950s, helped define the Situationist critique of the modern city. The theory of the "drift" recommends a course of aimless wandering in order to counteract the corporate colonization of urban life. It might be seen as an ambulatory variant of the surrealist technique of "automatic writing." Baudelaire's *flâneur*, immortalized in *The Flowers of Evil*, seems to be another of its precursors. In part, the Situationists promoted the drift as a mechanism of disruption: relying on the surrealist glorification of chance, it was intended to challenge the stultifying monotony of modern urban experience. But the practice of drifting also contained a constructive element. It was meant to spur practitioners off the beaten track (in the case of Paris, away from the "grand boulevards") and in search of neglected, forlorn, or magical haunts as yet unsullied by the heavy hand of developers and planners. In opposition to the capitalist hegemony of "instrumental reason," the Situationists sought to promote the principles of randomness and play.

To facilitate drifting, the Situationists produced so-called "psychogeographic maps." In one such procedure, Debord and his associates would take a map of Paris in hand and, with the aid of scissors, arbitrarily reconstitute the city's geography. "The production of psychogeographic maps, or even the introduction of alterations such as more or less arbitrarily transposing maps of two different regions," observes Debord, "can contribute to clarifying certain wanderings [*dérives*] that express not subordination to randomness but complete insubordination to habitual influences." Debord went on to recount the story of a friend who thoroughly enjoyed a tour of Germany's Harz Mountains while following a map of London. (One such blueprint, "The Naked City," graces the cover of *The Situationist City*.)

As the Situationists came of age during the 1950s, the utopian promise of the modern movement had taken a dystopian turn. Thus, the Situationists objected vigorously to Le Corbusier's disenchanted notion of modern architecture as a functionalist "machine for living in." As Debord noted astutely in 1961:

> The introduction of technology into everyday life—ultimately taking place within the framework of bureaucratized capitalism—certainly tends rather to reduce people's independence and creativity. The new prefabricated cities clearly exemplify the totalitarian tendency of modern capitalism's organization of life: the isolated inhabitants . . . see their lives reduced to the pure triviality of the repetitive combined with the obligatory absorption of an equally repetitive spectacle.

As Sadler shows in *The Situationist City*, the Situationists' experimental approach to the problems of modern urbanism often prefigure the innovations that would succeed modernism: postmodern and deconstructive architecture. Yet Sadler wonders, when all is said and done, how effective their critique really was: "Whether these ideas stood up to scrutiny was never really an issue for the avant-garde. It was enough that they dented the traditional esotericism of the intelligentsia, at a time when the American critic Clement Greenberg still held modernism's international stage with his insistence that popular culture was little short of despicable." In other words: it is difficult, if not impossible, to derive a set of constructive principles out of a program based on "the suppression of art." The Situationist notion of "unitary urbanism," along with Constant's inspired designs for a "New Babylon" (recently featured in a stunning exhibit, "Another City for Another Life," at the Drawing Center in Soho), sought to supplant modernist rationalism with an ethos of re-enchantment—that is, ultimately,

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with a new myth. Therein lies the essential paradox of Situationist urbanism, for myths cannot be "built."

ANSELM JAPPE'S *Guy Debord* offers a useful account of Debord's iconoclastic career as well as a lucid survey of his main ideas. By the early 1960s Debord had reached the conclusion that a cultural revolution, predicated on drifting and psychogeography, was insufficient in order to "change life." He immersed himself in the study of Marxist thought and fell under the influence of Georg Lukács's Hegelian-Marxist masterpiece *History and Class Consciousness*, which had been translated into French in the early 1960s. Lukács's discussion of Marx's notion of "commodity fetishism" as well as his watershed account of the "reification of consciousness" provided Situationist thought with much-needed theoretical depth. The end result of Debord's Marxist sabbatical was the 1967 publication of *Society of the Spectacle*.

Debord's concept of the "spectacle" is undoubtedly his most profound and lasting contribution to cultural criticism. In a *détournement* of Marx's *Capital*, the first sentence of Debord's book declares, "The entire life of societies in which modern conditions of production reign announces itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation." In this way, Debord sought to extend Marx's theory of alienation to the realities of affluent, postwar consumer society. Whereas for Marx and Lukács the effects of reification (literally: "to turn into a thing") had been largely confined to the workplace, Debord's theory of the "spectacle" sought to show how, under the omnipresent pressures of advertising and the modern mass media, its effects were diffused throughout society as a whole. The spectacle thus accounted for the commodification of life outside of the workplace, the sphere of "free" or "leisure time."

With the triumph of a consumer society, people in the modern world are left virtually without a thought they can legitimately call their own. In the *Paris Manuscripts* Marx had shown how, under capitalism, the economy becomes an autonomous power, indifferent to the needs of the men and women who serve it. In *Society of the Spectacle* Debord carried this argument a step further. Whereas in *Capital* Marx defined "commodity fetishism" as "a definite relation between men that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things," with the society of the spectacle, quantity had been transformed into quality: as Debord observes, "it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images." "The spectacle is the material reconstruction of religious illusion," observes Debord. "It no longer projects into the sky but houses within itself its absolute denial, its fallacious paradise. The spectacle is the technical realization of the exile of human powers into a beyond; separation perfected within the interior of man."

By now, of course, Debord's path-breaking insights have degenerated into a series of cultural left banalities and clichés. On the whole, however, this contemporary discourse sorely lacks Debord's radically disaffected and hypercritical edge. Instead it betrays a complacently celebratory character. It's as though the spectacle itself has won over those who were once its most voluble critics.

HOWEVER significant were Debord's activities as a cultural theorist and filmmaker—and they remain significant indeed—during the 1960s he and his Situationist cohorts attained legendary repute as the masterminds behind the May '68 student uprising. In 1966 the student union at the University of Strasbourg distributed the inflammatory Situationist pamphlet "On the Poverty of Student Life," which university authorities sought indelicately to suppress. By March 1968 the revolt had spread to the University of Nanterre outside of Paris and then to the Sorbonne, at which point the entire Latin Quarter became a battleground between students and the French riot police. In May the cause of the student radicals was taken up by striking workers at a local Renault plant and Sud-Aviation. Business as usual in the French capital ground to a halt. Between May 27 and 30 France experienced a power vacuum—no one was in control. (At this point, De Gaulle allegedly fled to Germany and contemplated summoning troops.) His back against the wall, De Gaulle promised new elections. And with the Grenelle

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accords, the French political class and the communist-controlled labor unions struck a deal to compel the workers to abandon their strikes and return to work.

Jappe complains, with some justification, that as the May events recede in memory, commentators have tended to eulogize Debord as a literary stylist and neglect his contributions as a political thinker. Yet many of the criticisms one might raise concerning the Situationists' cultural theory also hold for their political views. Under the influence of the council communist tradition, Debord became an advocate of worker self-management. (Many of these ideas he no doubt appropriated from the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group led by Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort.) Yet how this *autogestionniste* model might be transposed to the radically altered conditions of postindustrial society, where factories were closing en masse and proletarians were vastly outnumbered by state employees and white-collar workers, was a problem Debord never addressed. And, as Jappe admits, aspects of Debord's political thought remained beholden to some of the more questionable components of Hegelian-Marxist epistemology, such as Lukács's romantic conception of the proletariat as the totalizing "identical subject-object" of history. In an era justifiably disillusioned with the claims of "totality," Debord's uncritical embrace of such ideas has a distinctly antiquated ring.

Hence, whereas Jappe's criticisms of the posthumous "aestheticization" of Debord's legacy are apposite, today the practical value of Situationist political thought seems limited. Debord's own post-'68 writings are brimming with allusions to the world-historical, revolutionary importance of Situationist doctrines and ideas; Jappe, rightly, suggests that this self-understanding "bespeaks a certain megalomania, a loss of contact with reality." Finally, Debord's espousal of avant-garde cultural practice, coupled with a distinctly workerist political orientation, remains, to say the least, extremely contradictory. Although there is much to admire about the Situationists' resolute anarchist gestures of defiance—in a manner highly suggestive of Marcuse's commendation of the surrealist "Great Refusal"—to translate this perspective into a form of collective political practice would be foolish, if not impossible. ●

RICHARD WOLIN will teach European history at the Graduate Center for the City University of New York, starting in the fall. His latest book, *Heidegger's Children: Philosophy, National Socialism, and German-Jewish Identity*, is forthcoming in 2001 from Princeton University Press.

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It's a Wrong, Wrong, Wrong Interpretation

Editors:

How much longer will *Dissent* publish pieces such as "It's a Tab, Tab, Tab, Tab World" (Fall 1999) by Michael Tomasky and continue to call itself a magazine of the left? For a magazine of the left to publish the claim that New York's dailies still offer "a sufficient diet of variety and spice" without comment is remarkable. While he states that the two tabloids take information and then package "it in such a way that it both confirms and augments the reader's prejudice," the *Times* itself all too frequently does the same. Perhaps the "variety" of New York's daily press is in his mind.

The author allows that the *Times* might blame "the Salvadoran rebels for blowing up a bridge when the right-wing forces really did it." In reality, the *Times*'s record is full of misstatements and not just where the apparently "passé" third world is concerned. Economist Dean Baker at the Economic Policy Institute and Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) has long documented the errors of the *Times* on the side of unexamined "elite" opinion, often contradictory on its face, and has done so with the very orthodox tools of neoclassical economics (see endnote*).

Perhaps uncritical and incestuous reliance on government officials and public relations mavens along with editorialists who pride themselves on thinking like hedge-fund managers (Tom "Lexus" Friedman), is what it takes to be "probably the world's best newspaper." Outside of New York and the United States, however, even the mainstream press allows more "dissent" than this. As an American raised in five countries, I can assure you that *Le Monde, La Jornada, Liberation, La Repubblica, El Pais, Frankfurter Rundschau, Die Zeit*, the *Guardian*, and the *Independent* all provide top-level international coverage (not just of disasters or one-time events as the *Times* tends to do, not to mention the others) and they publish critical pieces and analysis that the *Times* wouldn't touch. *Dissent*, as a journal that considers itself to offer "the most sophisticated coverage of European politics you'll find anywhere outside of Europe," should take note.

Finally, if, as Tomasky maintains, even liberal dissent at the tabloids is now taboo, one is a right-wing house organ, and one of the two may fold in the coming years, just why is it that New Yorkers or anyone else should be so cheery about all that "variety" in the New York daily press?

DAVE DORKIN
Louisville, Ky.

*See http://www.fair.org/err/991213.html, Dean Baker's *Economic Reporting Review* and http://www.fair.org/activism/embassy-follow-up.html, the *London Observer* and the *Times* on NATO's attack on the Chinese embassy in Belgrade

Michael Tomasky Replies

Let's try to have a little sense of humor here, can we? I read FAIR's *Extra!*, and I admire it and find it useful. But woe to the world if every publication shared its dour outlook. My piece was—I thought—self-evidently somewhat tongue-in-cheek. But only somewhat: from an ideologically left point of view, of course the tabloids cut very little mustard. But there are other ways to see the world; the need for a shared civic laugh, for example, is not to be underestimated in a city like New York, and the tabloids often provide it. Besides, my piece contained plenty of information about how ideologically horrid the *Post* is, so I can hardly be accused of ignoring the question. As for the *Times*, some of what Dorkin says is true, but, as infuriating as it sometimes is, that paper has changed more in the last decade than it probably did in the previous fifty years, and the vast majority of those changes have been for the better—a younger staff, more diverse staff, and perhaps not groundbreaking but dutiful and regular coverage of New York's poor. It expresses the biases of the Ivy League ruling class that produces it? You don't say! I admit I don't read *Le Monde*, but I find it hard to imagine the same's not true of it.

Missing Half the Story

Editors:

Liza Featherstone raises some healthy doubts about "socially responsible" companies ("'It's Business, Man!':

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Unions and 'Socially Responsible' Corporations," *Dissent*, Fall 1999) But her skepticism seems to fail her when she advocates unions as the best possible solution for the disgruntled workers at Powell's Books. As a past employee of bookstores similar to Powell's, I think she's missing half the story.

One can support labor's right to organize without treating unions as a cure-all. As Featherstone reports, half of the workers in Powell's close vote (161-155) opposed the union. But she makes no attempt to explain the opposition, quoting union criticism only from owner Michael Powell. Although she calls his opinions "bluster," he sounds perfectly reasonable drawing a distinction between book clerks and farm workers.

One thing I valued about working for small bookstores, publishers, and film companies was a human scale of organization that didn't require union bureaucracy. When union recruiters came along, it was guaranteed they would add a new layer of fallibility, self-interest, and dues. There was no guarantee that they'd negotiate a better contract. Bargaining directly with management seemed easier. It also saved us from the kind of polarizing rhetoric that portrays Michael Powell as an enemy when he's more of a friend to progressive causes overall.

If unions want to broaden their constituency in cultural professions, they need to learn more flexibility. Too often, union regulations can be stifling to small cultural enterprises. In theaters, union contracts have driven the best work off Broadway. In film, even a fellow-traveler like Michael Moore employs non-union crews. Many unionized workers have serious complaints about their own representation. Anyone who cares about organized labor should confront these realities, not gloss over them.

THOM POWERS
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Liza Featherstone Replies

Frankly, I'm a little puzzled when Thom Powers argues that I treated unions as a "cure-all" and made "no attempt to explain the opposition side." In my article, I acknowledged that unions can be corrupt and was sympathetic to progressive workers' skepticism about them, arguing that such skeptics can be strong allies in the movement to create more democratic unions. Even more sympathetically, I observed that Michael Powell and other progressive employers are right to criticize unions' history of racism, sexism, and "nearly every imaginable form of exclusion." I wrote that having "opponents with the vocabulary to recognize such problems is probably constructive for the labor movement."

However, I'm thrilled to use Powers's letter as Exhibit A in my ongoing exploration of the bogus rhetoric deployed by "socially responsible" anti-unionists and their supporters. He invokes many of the clichés such businesspeople love, to familiarly disingenuous ends. He sniffs indignantly at "union bureaucracy," as if every business didn't create "bureaucracy" of its own. Powers, echoing Powell, complains that unions get in the way of business "flexibility." Far from "glossing over" this criticism in my article, I explained it fairly (more lucidly and specifically than Powell did, in fact). Then again, as Powell's employee Paul Couey said of Powell's "flexibility" fetish: "Most of the flexibility to which he was referring was managerial. We wanted some flexibility in our own finances!"

As for unions' "polarizing" tendencies, again, I analyzed this criticism in my article. It's a common one, and I argue that "the assumption that conflict itself is dangerous" is a cornerstone of "socially responsible" anti-unionism. Indeed it is dangerous — for bosses trying to maintain power. Conflict is dangerous for them because it can reveal that workers' and owners' interests are not one and the same.

And as for Powell's "perfectly reasonable" distinction between book clerks and farm workers, sure, those folks may be in pretty different situations. The same could be said of doctors and hotel maids, or symphony violinists and burger flippers. But people in all those professions have, at times, chosen to be represented by unions. Powell was using a union-busting maneuver well-known in white-collar workplaces: make it clear that union members are poor or working class, unlike themselves, and play on em-

Errata

The listing of recent and forthcoming books by *Dissent* editors in the Winter 2000 issue (p. 123) mistakenly gives Columbia University Press as the publisher of *The Oversocialized Conception of Man*, by Dennis Wrong, and the publication date as 2000. In fact, Columbia did publish *Skeptical Sociology*, of which this is a re-issue, but the current publisher is Transaction Publishers, and the date is 1999. We apologize to the author and to the publishers.

Our apologies to George Holoch, who translated Marc Lazar's article "Fin-de-Siècle Communism in Western Europe" (Winter 2000) but inadvertently didn't receive credit.

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ployees' desires to be seen as successful and middle class (and perhaps their liberal guilt: "What, you're exploited? Just think of those poor people suffering in Bangladesh.").

Just because the sacred cows of mushy progressivism exploit their workers doesn't make it OK. That was one of the most basic points of my article, and Powers reveals having missed it when he observes, as proof of the grooviness of the practice, that "even a fellow-traveler like Michael Moore employs non-union crews." But what that suggests is not that unions are irrelevant or useless, but that employers end up acting like employers. And "fellow-travelers" who also happen to be millionaires may end up acting like millionaires.

To Letter Writers

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By the late eighties, it was clear to novelist David Foster Wallace that television had absorbed the ironic critique of mass culture directed at it. Now television emits that very irony, a parody of parodies, like the "ignore advertising and just buy Sprite" campaign that's so brazen there's nothing left to laugh at. Why then, if it's been a solid decade since irony was the only way to sell yourself to the viewing public, are political candidates so steadfastly earnest that they adopt hokey campaign theme songs? Candidates who supposedly want nothing more than to endear themselves to the American public—a public that ad executives pegged long ago as a cynical lot—insist on believing that what will win them a place in our hearts is a *really groovy tune*. Where did they get this stuff?

George W. got two: Randy Travis's "I Did My Part"—a title reminiscent of Bob Dole's "I paid my dues now you have to elect me" attitude—and Stevie Wonder's "Signed, Sealed, Delivered I'm Yours," possibly chosen because Bush is so irony-impaired that he missed it in the title of Wonder's "Ghetto Paradise."

One obvious explanation is that politicians aren't aiming at a target as big as TV advertisers are. Perhaps pollsters know the key swing voter is old enough to remember McFadden and Whitehead, who wrote "Ain't No Stopping Us Now," the lyrical momentum behind Bill Bradley. But candidates can't be trying to impress anybody with their theme songs. The biggest musical hubbub, of course, was over Hillary's candidacy announcement, when the CD accidentally spun on to "Captain Jack," who, Billy Joel promised, "will get ya high tonight." The opposition sounded the alarm at this incontrovertible evidence that electing a pinstripe lawyer would herald the return of an army of hemp-wielding hippies and half-naked flower children. No one knows why Rodham Clinton responded to charges of being a carpetbagger by suggesting that *thinking about* a place is really just as good as being physically stuck there, as she did with "I'm in a New York State of Mind."

But it's not just Hillary who's bumbled. Remember how Orwellian focus groups are, monitoring every muscle twitch to hone a political message until it tugs on precise heart strings? Remember your sense of powerlessness during the movie *Wag the Dog*, when the kingmakers craft a sanctimonious, instant patriotic ballad to control us gullible millions? Now think of Al Gore coming on stage to "Love Train." The Democratic heir apparent, with all the media-manipulating strategists money can buy, but with all the smooth moves of the Tin Man, is supposed to mesmerize us by shaking his hips to "Love Train"?

Early in the race it seemed possible that the White House would be rented by the one candidate without an anthem, John McCain. But if you're still upset that some people don't know McFadden and Whitehead, what about the McCain person I spoke to? I agree with her that "Happy Days Are Here Again" would make a great campaign jingle, but is her enthusiasm, like mine, accentuated by the knowledge that it was originally used by FDR?

McCain at the turntable, mixing Roosevelt, Reagan, and Lincoln would deliver the postmodern irony that David Foster Wallace was talking about. The problem, as Wallace points out, is that "irony's singularly unuseful when it comes to constructing anything to replace the hypocrisies it debunks." Perhaps that's why irony, slingshot of the opposition before it was picked up by television, hasn't been deployed much by the left against these politicians. Sure, it would make us feel better, but how would it help us come up with a better option? Irony, as mass-media critics learned and television rejoiced, can be immobilizing, whereas what we need now is to move. Just to something better than "Love Train."

Greg Smithsimon

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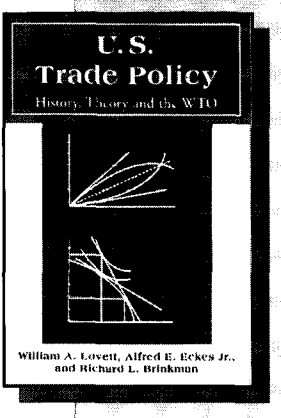

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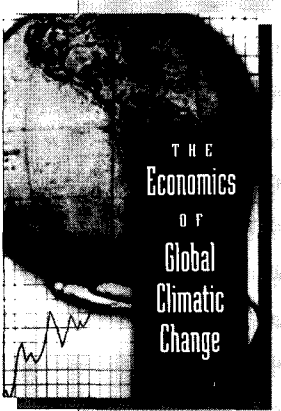

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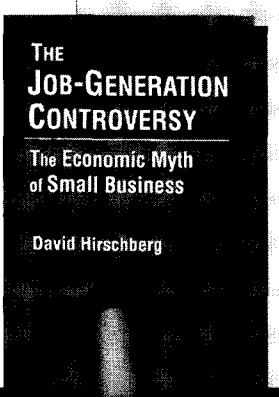

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